

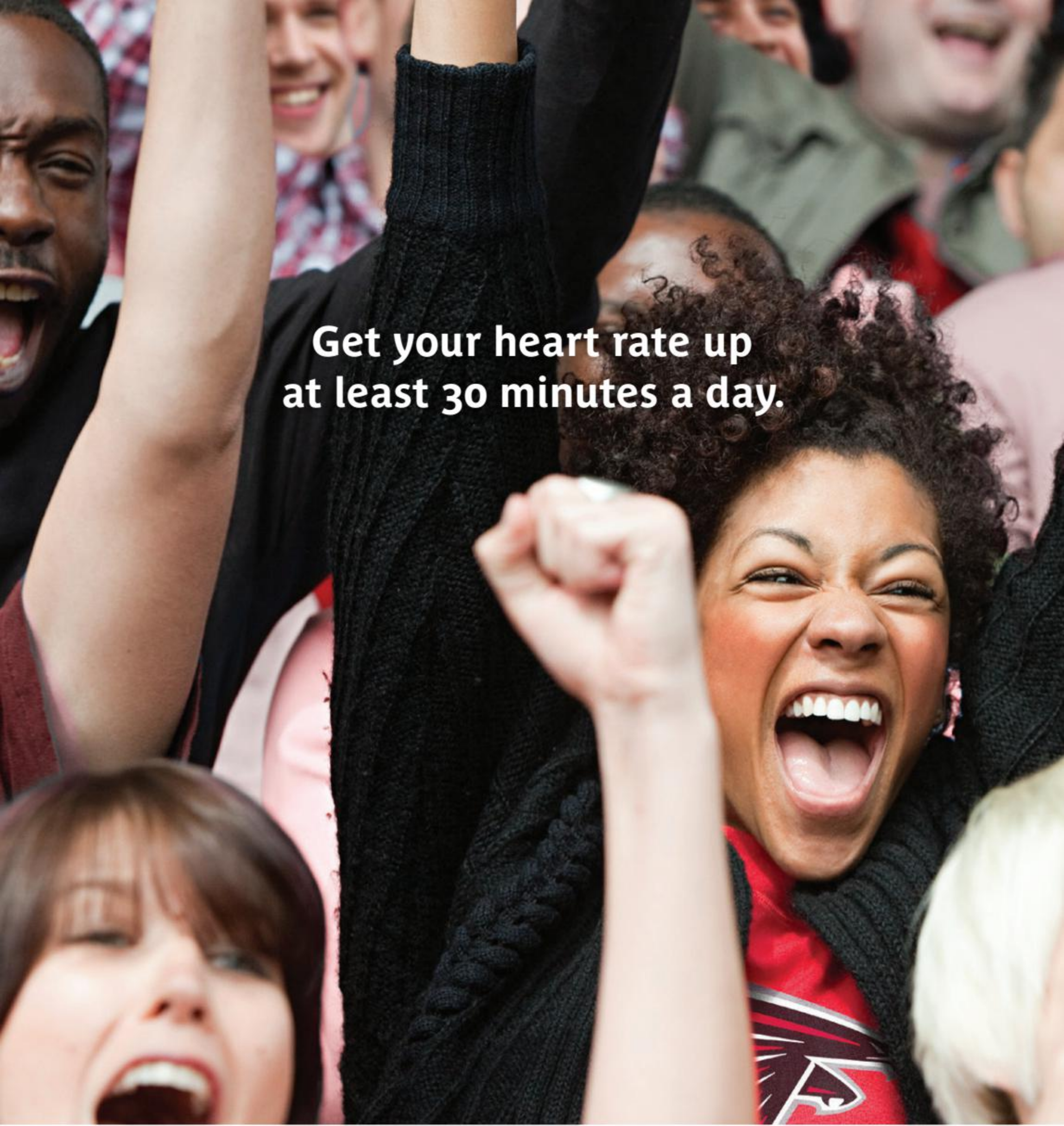


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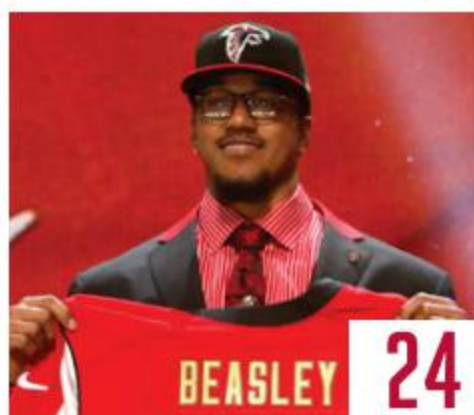


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PRESEASON 02	 @ NY JETS FRIDAY, AUGUST 21 // 7:30 PM METLIFE STADIUM CW69
PRESEASON 03	 @ MIAMI SATURDAY, AUGUST 29 // 7:00 PM SUN LIFE STADIUM CW69
PRESEASON 04	 BALTIMORE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 // 7:00 PM THE GEORGIA DOME CW69

2015 REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE

WEEK 01	 PHILADELPHIA MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 // 7:10 PM*** THE GEORGIA DOME ESPN	WEEK 10	 BYE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15 // BYE
WEEK 02	 @ NY GIANTS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 // 1:00 PM METLIFE STADIUM FOX	WEEK 11	 INDIANAPOLIS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22 // 1:00 PM* THE GEORGIA DOME CBS
WEEK 03	 @ DALLAS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 // 1:00 PM AT&T STADIUM FOX	WEEK 12	 MINNESOTA SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29 // 1:00 PM* THE GEORGIA DOME FOX
WEEK 04	 HOUSTON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 // 1:00 PM THE GEORGIA DOME CBS	WEEK 13	 @ TAMPA BAY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 // 1:00 PM* RAYMOND JAMES STADIUM FOX
WEEK 05	 WASHINGTON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11 // 1:00 PM** THE GEORGIA DOME FOX	WEEK 14	 @ CAROLINA SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13 // 1:00 PM* BANK OF AMERICA STADIUM FOX
WEEK 06	 @ NEW ORLEANS THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15 // 8:25 PM*** MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME CBS NFL	WEEK 15	 @ JACKSONVILLE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20 // 1:00 PM* EVERBANK FIELD FOX
WEEK 07	 @ TENNESSEE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25 // 1:00 PM** NISSAN STADIUM FOX	WEEK 16	 CAROLINA SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27 // 1:00 PM* THE GEORGIA DOME FOX
WEEK 08	 TAMPA BAY SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1 // 1:00 PM** THE GEORGIA DOME FOX	WEEK 17	 NEW ORLEANS SUNDAY, JANUARY 3 // 1:00 PM* THE GEORGIA DOME FOX
WEEK 09	 @ SAN FRANCISCO SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8 // 4:05 PM** LEVI'S STADIUM FOX	    	



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FALCONS PREVIEW

By Craig Sager II

On Feb. 2, the day after Super Bowl XLIX, the Atlanta Falcons officially announced the hiring of new head coach Dan Quinn.

The franchise eagerly welcomed the up-and-coming defensive-minded leader that crowned its list of candidates and jumpstarted one of the busiest offseasons the team will ever see. From Quinn's hiring to mid-June, Atlanta not only built an almost entirely new coaching staff, but also surpassed the century mark with over 100 official transactions by the time the pre-camp roster was set.

Before the roster underwent its series of transformations, Quinn finalized the staff he had begun envisioning when head coaching interest first began to surface during Seattle's run to Super Bowl XLVIII. On the defensive side of the ball, Quinn started with the familiar coaching model that helped shape his success in Seattle by hiring veteran Richard Smith from Denver to coordinate the defense and bringing in a secondary specialist in Raheem Morris to specifically work with the pass defense.

"Defensively, to have Richard Smith and Raheem Morris, it's a similar way we had it in Seattle with myself and Rocky Seto," explained Quinn. "The front seven [with Smith] and back end [with Morris] are looking at things together so those two partnered up defensively and I'll certainly be involved with the defense."

Hiring Jeff Ulbrich to lead the linebackers was an easy decision for Quinn after coaching him during his time with the 49ers and later coaching with him in Seattle.

"Passion, toughness, energy is what he [Ulbrich]

brings," explained Quinn. "I coached with him in Seattle so I knew if I had an opportunity to have him on board I just thought about how much better he just pulls it out of guys. He's got that kind of personality, that kind of teacher, that kind of commitment."

There is no doubting that Quinn is a defense oriented coach, but his years mastering that side of the ball gave him the understanding of the type of offensive staff he wanted to bring in. New coordinator Kyle Shanahan has paved a trail of success with a playbook that has tremendous flexibility and balance that Quinn has first hand experience with.

"Going against Kyle Shanahan in the past has been really difficult," admitted Quinn. "It's been the balanced run/pass stuff, the keepers, the play action, the movement, all that [type of] game is hard to defend. We were hopefully going to get connected if it [getting a head coaching position] happened a year ago, but it ended up working out to where we could do it again this year."

New offensive line coach Chris Morgan also came from Seattle and like Shanahan, is a coach that is totally committed to the wide-zone running game. Wade Harman was moved from assistant offensive line coach to tight end coach this year and Quinn's respect for veteran receiver coach Terry Robiskie and running backs coach Bobby Turner has been stated throughout the offseason.

As for the quarterbacks coach, Quinn looked

for a leader that was familiar with Shanahan's system to help Matt Ryan flourish. Matt LaFleur spent four seasons in the same role with the Washington Redskins under Shanahan and coached Robert Griffin III during his Pro Bowl rookie campaign and to the team's first NFC East title in 13 years. Under LaFleur's coaching, Griffin set club rookie records in pass completions (258), passing yards (3,200), passing touchdowns (20) and rushing yards by a quarterback (815).

"LaFleur has spent time with Kyle [Shanahan] so I thought that was important for Kyle to have somebody who had that kind of connection to help push Matt [Ryan]," said Quinn.

On special teams, Quinn believes he is teaming up with one of the best teachers in the game with Keith Armstrong, who has been in Atlanta since 2008.

"Keith Armstrong from the special teams standpoint, I've always felt like is one of the best fundamental coaches in football," said Quinn. "So I had a chance to connect with him; it was a no-brainer. All these guys together, I think one of the things I like most is that they are trying to find out everything they can and pull guys into being the very best they can. First guy all the way down to the 90th man on the roster, find out the unique stuff a guy has and let's draw it all out of him. It adds to the competitive fire of the team and fortunately for us and our team we have this group of men who are so committed to helping guys develop and get better."



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MAKING MOVES

Atlanta used the two months leading up to the draft to reshape much of the roster.

Linebacker O'Brien Schofield was added as a rotating piece for Quinn to use for depth. After three years with the Cardinals, Schofield was a member of the Super Bowl-winning Seahawks team two years ago and he played every position on the Seattle defensive line last season. Offensive lineman Jared Smith is another Seattle product signed. He played defensive line at New Hampshire before switching to offense in the pros. Smith's defensive background and quickness off the ball coined him the nickname "Fat Rabbit" while playing in Seattle.

In an effort to boost the tight end position, Atlanta added Tony Moeaki and Jacob Tamme. Moeaki was no longer needed in Seattle after the trade for former New Orleans Saints Pro Bowler Jimmy Graham and Tamme brings the experience

certainly help in the film room.

The other key addition to the receiving corps came in the fourth round of this year's draft with East Carolina's Justin Hardy. The 6-foot receiver was a high-jumper in high school and that explosiveness, timing and control describes the way he attacks the football when it is in the air. His ability to secure catches in traffic and his overall toughness drew instant recognition from the time he was in college when he showed up on campus as a walk-on his freshman season. By his redshirt freshman season, he was on scholarship and started eight of 10 games while setting the first of many school records with a freshman high of 64 catches for 658 yards and six touchdowns. Hardy would keep getting better each season. Last year, Hardy became the NCAA's all-time leader in receptions and finished his historic career with 387 catches, 4,541 receiving yards and 35 touchdowns.

the backfield. Linebacker Paul Worrilow has led the team in tackles the last two seasons and worked throughout the offseason on his explosiveness and speed to fit Quinn's system.

Every level of the defense returns with improvements, but the one position that will receive the most attention this season is 'the Leo'. This pass-rushing position is tailor made for this year's first-round pick, Vic Beasley Jr., and will line him primarily on the right side, where he spent most of his record-setting collegiate career at Clemson.

"Right side is more comfortable for me but I'm doing whatever I can to help the team," said Beasley during minicamp.

With Beasley's combination of speed and power and the ability to line up wide and bring heat to the backfield, opposing offenses will have to cover more area and take the rookie's game-changing abilities into account. This position



of playing with Peyton Manning for three years in Indianapolis and three years in Denver that should translate well to a veteran pocket passer like Ryan.

Two of the biggest additions were linebackers Justin Durant and Brooks Reed, which brought in two experienced playmakers to the heart of the defense. Durant is a "run-and-hit" style linebacker that brings a fast and physical style when he steps on the field.

"When I get to the football, I am going to try to make as much noise as possible," said Durant.

Reed came from the Texans and with his 6-foot-3, 254-pound frame is the ideal fit to hold the edge on the strong-side. The defensive line also added Adrian Clayborn, the No. 20 overall pick of the 2011 draft to play end.

OFFENSIVE BOOST

Atlanta's receiving duo of Julio Jones and Roddy White is an established force around the NFL and they top the Falcons wide receiver totem pole again this season. The difference with the receiving corps this season, however, is that the supporting cast could be as talented as it's ever been. The Falcons brought in Nick Williams and Leonard Hankerson through free agency and Devin Hester is back after sparking big plays as a third and fourth receiver option last season. Both Williams and Hankerson spent time with Shanahan while he coordinated the Washington offense and will

NEED FOR SPEED

In the backfield, Shanahan's wide zone running scheme is built for backs that can get outside quickly and use one cut to explode upfield. Devonta Freeman and Antone Smith showed this ability last year and the team added another home-run threat with Indiana running back Tevin Coleman in this year's draft. Coleman was a third-round pick (73rd overall) that put up 2,036 rushing yards off 270 carries (7.5 yards per carry) and 15 touchdowns last season with the Hoosiers. After a breakout sophomore season, Coleman exploded for his record-setting junior campaign and then declared early for the draft. His steep improvements in each of his three years have many projecting him as a running back that has yet to hit his peak.

NEW AGE

Third-year pro Desmond Trufant returns as the leader of the secondary with safety William Moore. However, safeties Kemal Ishmael and Ricardo Allen proved to be starting caliber players this offseason and Robert Alford, Dezmen Southward, Jalen Collins and Akeem King load the secondary with more young talent.

Last year's second-round pick, Ra'Shede Hageman is expected to play a significant role up front as a 6-foot-6, 318-pound end and this year's fifth round pick Grady Jarrett will boost the tackle position with his low leverage and ability to find

defines what Quinn's fast and high-tempo defenses are all about and it will make this an entertaining unit to watch, especially on third downs.

THE SLATE

The Falcons open the season with a Monday Night Football showdown against the Philadelphia Eagles on Sept. 14 and then follow it with two more NFC East games with visits to the New York Giants and Dallas Cowboys. The Falcons return home Week 4 to face Houston and then host Washington Week 5. After the homestand, Atlanta will have just four days to prepare for its first divisional game of the season, an Oct. 15 Thursday Night Football battle with New Orleans Week 6. If the Falcons can grasp the new systems and continue improving each week, then they will be prepared for a critical final five weeks of the season, which includes three road games and four divisional games. Atlanta plays at Tampa Bay on Dec. 6 before facing the two-time defending division champion Panthers for the first time of the season on Dec. 13 at Carolina. After a trip to Jacksonville on Dec. 20, two crucial home games to end the season remain on the schedule. Atlanta will host Carolina on Dec. 27 before closing the regular season by welcoming New Orleans to the Georgia Dome on Jan. 3.

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QUINN'S CHILDHOOD DREAM COMES TRUE WITH FALCONS

By Craig Sager II

Dan Quinn was a youngster in Morristown, New Jersey when he fell in love with the game of football. By the time he was a teenager, his dream of being a head football coach was developing into what would become a lifelong passion.

"Early on I knew that's what I wanted to do," explained Quinn. "Growing up I loved football and I found out I loved competing at the very core. I wanted to play as long as I could, but once that ended, I wanted to coach."

Quinn was 13 years old when Bill Parcells was named head coach of the neighboring New York Giants in 1983. He witnessed the Parcells era take flight down the road in East Rutherford's Giants Stadium and still recognizes the Pro Football Hall of Fame coach as one of his earliest influences.

"I first wanted to become a coach when I was growing up in New Jersey watching that [Giants] team play and the toughness and the energy that they played with," explained Quinn. "So much of it really came from the energy of the head coach [Parcells]."

Hall of Famers Lawrence Taylor and Harry Carson and All-Pro selections Carl Banks and Leonard Marshall led the Giants hard-hitting 3-4 defense known as the Big Blue Wrecking Crew. Parcells, who grew up in nearby Hasbrouck Heights, 30 miles east of Quinn's hometown of Morristown, added to the excitement as Quinn watched the New Jersey-native coach his team to Super Bowl victories in 1986 and 1990.

Nearly three decades after Parcells steered the 1986 Giants to the franchise's first Super Bowl, it was Quinn's hard-hitting Seattle defense that led the Seahawks to their first-ever Lombardi Trophy. The 43-8 rout over the favored Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XLVIII will be remembered as one

of the most dominant defensive performances in NFL history. It was a full-circle moment for Quinn. The game was played in East Rutherford's MetLife Stadium, right around the corner from where Quinn's love of the game and passion first formed.

Now, after 21 years of coaching accomplishments and a legacy of his own, Quinn's childhood dream of becoming a head coach has finally come true with the Atlanta Falcons.

QUINN THE LEADER

On his ascent up the coaching ladder, success has followed Quinn every step of the way. With a keen recognition of talent, development of players and a knack for putting pieces together as a cohesive unit, peers and former players attest to his greatness both on and off the field.

The leadership traits present in Quinn now were visible well before he was named head coach. From his multi-sport varsity days, to a collegiate career at Salisbury State (now Salisbury University), where Quinn captained both the football and track team, leadership and an unbreakable competitive spirit defined him throughout. Quinn's playing career even earned him an induction into the Salisbury University athletics Hall of Fame in 2005. The same fire and passion for competition has continued to grow throughout Quinn's coaching journey.

After graduating college in 1994, he took his first coaching steps at William & Mary before joining the Virginia Military Institute staff the following year in 1995 to work with their defensive line. In 1996, Quinn took over the defensive line duties at Hofstra and in 2000 accepted his first coordinating position with the Pride. The following year, Quinn joined the 49ers staff as a defensive quality control coach and two years later he would begin an eight-year stretch of coaching defensive

line in the NFL with San Francisco, Miami, the New York Jets and Seattle.

Quinn returned to college football from 2011-2012 as defensive coordinator of the Florida Gators before making the move back to the NFL as a first-time coordinator. He would reach Super Bowls in both seasons as Seattle's defensive play-caller.

The return to college football as a coordinator in 2011-12 after spending 10 years with the NFL was an opportunity and experience that Atlanta's new leader believes transformed him into the coach he is today.

"Returning to college football those two years has totally helped me on the field and off the field," explained Quinn. "On the field it helped because I found out the fast pace that college football tries to work in the spread offense. But probably more importantly, I had better understanding of the young guys coming into the league. Maybe for 10 years I hadn't had the full appreciation at times how young these guys are and the things that they don't know about it. It gave me real perspective to know how to help develop these players from the very beginning both on and off the field. I think if I had not had that experience I wouldn't be as prepared to help them and develop them in the right way that I am now. I'm totally fortunate to have that two-year stint where I was able to connect with the players, not only there, but the college athletes in general and to help have a better appreciation for what their world is like."

THE MASTERMIND

Quinn's philosophies are always evolving and he actively searches for new boundaries to push, however a focus on connecting with his players and other coaches over the last two decades has shaped his style of coaching the most. Quinn trusts in the belief that just like a classroom where one

student might be a visual learner and the other one an auditory learner, the process of understanding football concepts differs from player to player as well. The ways Quinn challenges himself to become a better teacher in his profession is one of the many qualities that has received so much respect as a coach and leader.

While working with Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll in Seattle, Quinn began viewing talent in a completely different light. Rather than looking at a player's limitations and what he cannot do, he adapted the mentality to only look at what each guy can bring to the team and build from there.

"As I got older, you go through all the unique experiences that you go through, you pull a little bit from a lot of those experiences and say that's really good, I would not do that," said Quinn. "That's how you shape your own philosophy. I think the people that challenge us to have our own philosophy and way of thinking makes it way more fun."

EVERYONE IS CHALLENGED

From day one with the Falcons, Quinn's focus and message has been clear and the competitive environment has challenged each player and coach, while strengthening the bond of the team. In the NFL, there is a comparable and level-playing field when it comes to the amount of talent on each roster and it ultimately comes down to preparation and the little things when stacking up big plays and key wins during a season. The extra gear a head coach can bring out of his players and assistants each day and the creation of an environment where teammates will push the guy next to them to get better is the type of atmosphere Quinn is building with the Falcons.

"Everyday is a championship game opportunity," explained Quinn. "That is just how we play. We attack.

We go after people all the time and that way there are times where you don't have to get tight to over try when the playoffs come and the championship games come and the Super Bowls come. We always do what we do. We play with that style and with that fashion. Let's go and attack it. All that stuff is a little far out there for us so let's make sure we put the work in now. Let's pay the dues on how hard we have to work now to have that kind of success."

Leading a solid unit in both the pass defense and the run defense is a trait shared with all of Quinn's defenses that showcases his talent. As a coordinator with Florida, his defense was top-10 in the country both seasons. During the 2011 season, the Gators would rank eighth nationally in total defense (299.5), seventh in passing defense (166.8) and second in third-down defense (27.12 percent). After his two years in Gainesville, Fla., Quinn spent the last two football seasons in Seattle and saw the same level of dominance in all statistical categories. He oversaw the NFL's top defensive unit over the two-year span. The defense led the League with just 270.4 yards allowed per game, 15.2 points per game and 178.8 passing yards per game while holding opponents to 91.6 rushing yards per game.

SUPER BOWL RESUME

Interest in hiring Quinn as a head coach around the NFL began to soar during Seattle's first run to the Super Bowl, and he began thinking about what type of staff he would be interested in building for whenever the day would come.

"I was fortunate enough towards the end of the 2013 season to have those kinds of thoughts to put them together and start organizing myself to talk to some teams. I knew if the opportunity came by this year it was going to be really clear if we could find the most unique teachers and collection of guys to

help push it."

Falcons President and CEO Rich McKay is the son of College Football Hall of Fame coach John McKay and has been around football coaches an the game his entire life. With nearly 40 years around the NFL, McKay can point out what makes Quinn so unique and the type of atmosphere he has brought to the organization.

LOOKING AT THE POSITIVES

"He has his own signature that you see everyday in the office and then you see it transfer to the field," said McKay. "His positive approach to the game, the players and the way he teaches the game- that's Dan's signature and he's very genuine about it and that speaks volumes. I think when you research Dan, forget the interviewing -which he did marvelous at, I think it was interesting how uniform everybody was in talking about him. What a good football coach he was, what a good position coach he was, what a good coordinator he was and what a good head coach they thought he was going to be. And it always came back to the fact that Dan is a "glass is half-full" guy and because he will work extremely hard but he will also make the job enjoyable for his coaches and his players. And that will have them rise up and play better and that's what we've experienced since he's been here."

Expectations have never been higher with a landmark 50th season approaching and a state-of-the art stadium getting closer to its unveiling by the day. Quinn has set the bar high for himself as a leader and teacher since his childhood and brings this blueprint to the helm. A positive attitude and infinite passion for the game drove Quinn's climb to the Falcons. Now, the New Jersey native that drew inspiration from leadership and hard-hitting defenses can call Atlanta home as a first-time head coach.



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GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW ATLANTA FALCONS COORDINATORS

By Avi Goodfriend

The Falcons landed two of the League's top football minds through the NFL's annual coaching carousel this offseason. Offensive Coordinator Kyle Shanahan and Defensive Coordinator Richard Smith join first-time head coach Dan Quinn's staff and make the Falcons one of six teams this season that will debut new coordinators on both sides of the football (Bills, Jets, Broncos, Raiders, Bears).

Between the two coaches, they share 35 years of experience in the NFL. Smith began his NFL coaching career in 1988 with the Houston Oilers. Shanahan started as a quality control specialist for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2004-05. Shanahan represents NFL royalty with his last name alone, as he is the son of coaching icon Mike Shanahan. In his career, the elder Shanahan has been the head coach of the Los Angeles Raiders, Denver Broncos and Washington Redskins, winning two Super Bowls with the Broncos.

The younger Shanahan landed his first offensive coordinator gig in Houston in 2008, after two years of coaching wide receivers ('06) and quarterbacks ('07). Under Shanahan in 2008 and 2009, the Texans passing game came to life, led by former Falcons backup quarterback Matt Schaub. In 2009, Schaub posted career highs of 4,770 yards and 29 touchdowns on his way to the Pro Bowl. From Houston, Shanahan got a job under his father as the Washington Redskins offensive coordinator in 2010.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Two years later, in the 2012 NFL Draft, the Redskins selected quarterback Robert Griffin III out of Baylor with the number-two overall pick. At the time, the Washington offense was not suited to the skills that RGIII possessed and Shanahan was tasked with turning the future of the franchise into an immediate short-term fix. So, he essentially scrapped the existing offense and built one around the game of his mobile quarterback, incorporating the read-option, more rollout plays and a run-based offense among other aspects. As a result, RGIII posted his best season to date with 3,200 yards, 20 touchdowns and only five interceptions as he led his team to an NFC East title. Rookie running back Alfred

Morris also exploded on the scene in Shanahan's system, rushing for 1,613 yards and 13 touchdowns.

GETTING HIS GUY

Matt Ryan is easily the most talented and consistent quarterback that Shanahan has ever coached. He is confident that Ryan will adjust to his offensive philosophies and play at the high level he has shown throughout his career.

"The stuff we're asking him [Ryan] to do might be a little different sometimes, but he's done a lot of it also," explained Shanahan. "He's been with a number of coordinators, he's run a lot of different schemes and Matt can really do anything that you ask him to do. It's about deciding what he does best, what our team does best and it's been a lot of fun for me to have a guy like that to work with. I think he obviously helps me be better too."

Shanahan also hopes to dramatically improve the running game as he did in Washington and he has a trio of explosive backs with Devonta Freeman, Antone Smith and rookie Tevin Coleman to rotate.

A major change that will be implemented is the use of Shanahan's zone-blocking scheme on the offensive line, the same style of blocking that his father ran in Denver en route to two Super Bowl rings. Essentially, the object of the zone-blocking scheme is to create more open running lanes. It's predicated on quick offensive linemen who possess a good first step and can pull to the outside when called upon.

Another area where Shanahan looks to increase production is at the tight end spot. This summer, Jacob Tamme was added to the roster and he will be seeing first-team reps. In both Washington and Houston, Shanahan was able to morph seemingly average tight ends into proven starters in his system. In Houston, Owen Daniels racked up 110 catches for 1,381 yards and seven touchdowns in the two seasons Shanahan was a coach. Chris Cooley and Jordan Reed both blossomed in Washington under Shanahan's system, as it appeared to bring the best out of both players.

On the other side of the ball, Smith is hoping to reinvent the Falcons defense. He got his first

defensive job with the Denver Broncos in 1993 as the special teams/linebackers coach and remained there until 1996. The head coach at Denver during his time there was none other than Mike Shanahan, and the connections to this current Falcons team don't stop there. From 1997-2002, Smith was the linebackers' coach in San Francisco, and in 2001-02, a quality control assistant by the name of Dan Quinn got his first NFL job with the 49ers. Quinn and Smith were again on the same staff in 2005 with the Miami Dolphins, when Smith was the Defensive Coordinator and Quinn was the defensive line coach. After one year in Miami, Smith became the defensive coordinator in Houston from 2006-2008. During the 2008 season, Kyle Shanahan was the offensive coordinator of the Texans and the two are once again prepared to coach their respective sides of the same organization. Needless to say, Smith's experience in the League and chemistry with many of these current Falcons coaching staff will certainly help this season.

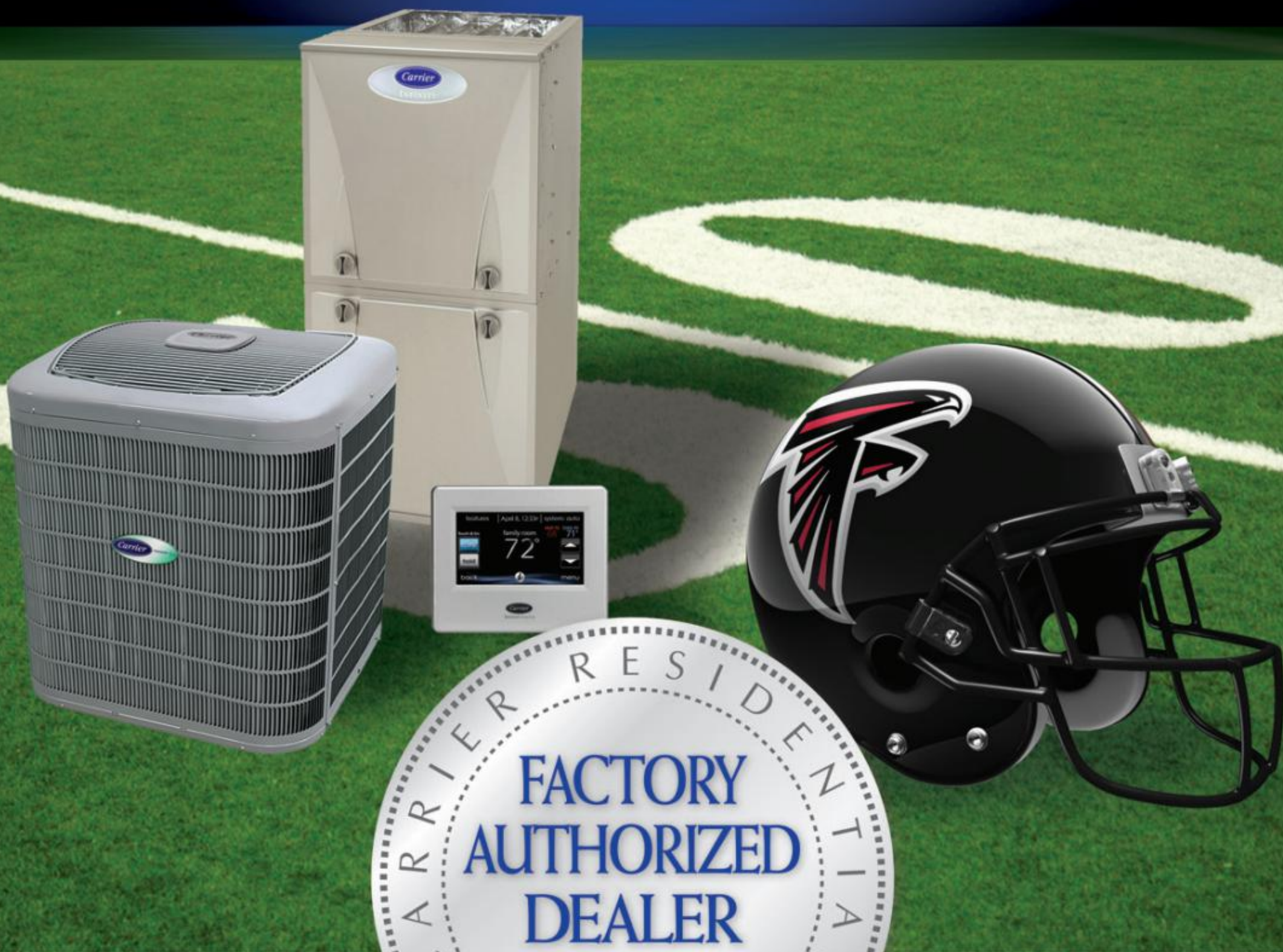
CRAFTING THE MOLD

Smith's most recent stint came as the Broncos linebackers coach from 2011-2014, when he did an excellent job. One of his finest accomplishments has to be the molding of All-Pro linebacker Von Miller. In 2012, Miller exploded with 55 tackles and 18.5 sacks and finished last season with 48 tackles and 14 sacks. People around the Falcons organization are excited, because this year's first-round pick, Vic Beasley Jr., has natural talent similar to Miller.

Miller isn't the only product of Richard Smith's coaching expertise, as he's coached 15 players to 18 Pro Bowls. Among the pro-bowlers are Bruce Matthews (1992), Jason Taylor (2005), Zach Thomas (2005), DeMeco Ryans (2009), Von Miller (2011, 2012, 2014), and DeMarcus Ware (2014).

Smith and Shanahan are primary pieces to a staff that shares high expectations and a familiarity with Quinn's style. Their years of experience will be invaluable when working with the rest of the team and building a playbook with a roster loaded with established veterans and emerging talent.

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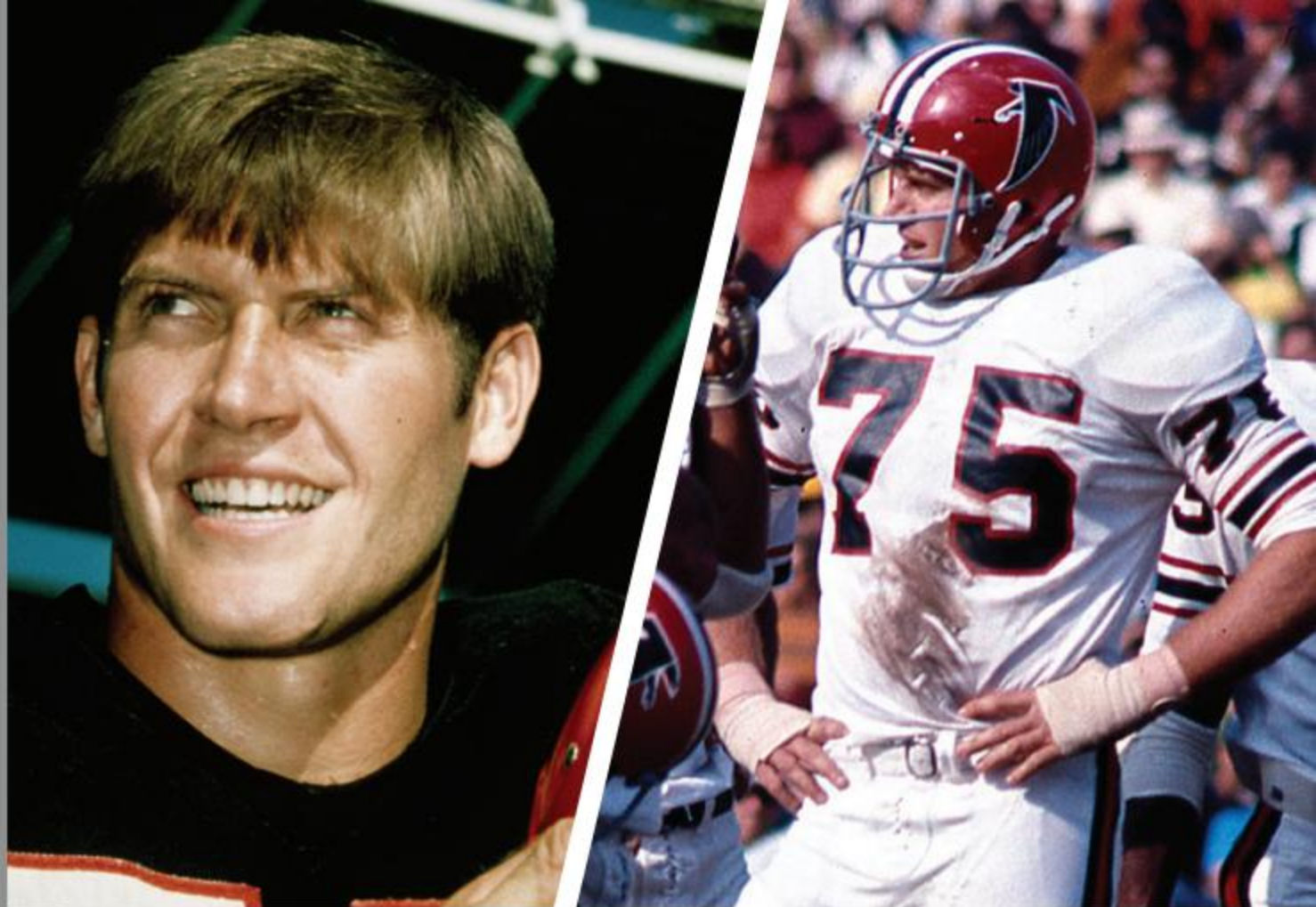
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ATLANTA FALCONS IN THE 60s



KUNZ SHAPED BY ATLANTA DURING DECADE OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

By Craig Sager II

The 1960's were a time where the city of Atlanta endured the growing pains of a booming metropolis coming face-to-face with the crest of the Civil Rights Movement. The leadership and perseverance throughout this decade shaped the great city we see today. There is so much to learn when looking back at the city during this time and NFL legend George Kunz has carried his first-hand experiences with the developing Falcons during it into each new chapter of his life.

Kunz grew up in California and went to college in the midwest at Notre Dame before the Falcons welcomed in the 6-foot-5 tackle to the south with the No. 2 pick of the 1969 draft.

"They had just put in the Braves stadium. Hank Aaron was there," recalled Kunz. "The Braves were packing people in. Atlanta was getting to be known as the great southern city. It already was one but now everyone else was starting to realize what was taking shape there."

FLEDGLING FALCONS

Establishing a football presence in the south that would promote Atlanta's growth on a national scale was the driving force behind bringing the franchise to the city in 1965.

"There was a lot of emphasis by Carl Sanders, who was the governor of Georgia around that time that he wanted an NFL team," explained Kunz. "It was important to him to have the credibility of the NFL at that particular time when it came to the city of Atlanta because he wanted to make it the real city of the south. As governor that was his mission to do. From that, it was logical for him to bring in

the Smith family and Rankin Smith as the owners of the Falcons because of the contributions the family made to the state."

Linebacker Tommy Nobis would be the team's first-ever pick but the next challenge would be building as much athleticism around Nobis to catch up with the rest of the League. Kunz even recalls seeing 1968 shot put gold-medalist Randy Matson talking with the Falcons about possibly trying out for a spot during one of his visits to the Falcons before the 1969 draft.

"It was great coming to a place [Atlanta] where a young man would say 'yes sir' and 'no sir' to you," reflected Kunz.

Atlanta was looking for a cornerstone on the offensive line that year and that's where Kunz came in. O.J. Simpson went No. 1 and that gave the Atlanta a chance pick the towering tackle at No. 2.

Kunz made eight Pro Bowls in a nine-year stretch during his 12-year pro career and remains one of best offensive linemen to ever play the game. On and off the field, he used a humbled approach to find new ways to prepare himself for each new challenge.

"I used to go up to defensive ends my rookie year after games and ask how I could get better," admitted Kunz. "Some guys said wait, you gotta be kidding. Why are you asking me? I have to be competing against you! But other guys would be really nice. I got the best advice from other offensive tackles, guys that I grew up admiring. It doesn't help to be proud, because if you are, then people aren't going to think you need the help."

Kunz wanted to study law after college, but knew he could not pass up an opportunity to play in the NFL. After his six years with the Falcons, the

team shipped Kunz to Baltimore in part of a deal to move up and take Steve Bartkowski with the top pick of the 1975 Draft.

In Baltimore, Kunz helped turned around a team that was 2-12 in 1974 to 10-4, 11-3 and then 10-4 and see three straight AFC East titles. He would make four Pro bowls there, opening holes for the great running back Lydell Mitchell.

HITTING THE LAW BOOKS

Kunz had established himself as a great football player, but going to law school was still a passion of his. However, he knew he had his wife Mary Sue and son Matt to take care of and went into business to make sure his family was well off before he tackled law school.

"I have always believed that football was a phase of my life," said Kunz. "It was important to study when you are young because if you don't then you are narrowing the scope of what you can do."

After 25 years in the business world, Mary Sue urged Kunz to follow his dream and enter law school. In 2007, a 59-year-old Kunz walked into law school at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Today he is five years removed and an attorney.

Part of his caseload includes pro bono work assisting low-income couples that cannot get a divorce in order to amicably resolve issues and decrease the emotional impact on the kids.

"The poverty I saw [when I got to Atlanta in the 1960's], I wasn't ready for that, but I was really exposed to a lot of diversity and the experience helped make me who I am today."

ATLANTA FALCONS IN THE 70s



BARTOWSKI LEADS FALCONS INTO UNCHARTERED TERRITORY

By Chip Pogue

With the first overall pick in the 1975 draft, the Atlanta Falcons used a franchise changing trade to move up and draft quarterback Steve Bartkowski. He would go on to set every passing record in Falcons history, which included 23,470 passing yards and 154 touchdown passes during his 11-year career. Those records stood for over 20 years until Matt Ryan came along.

"It [going No. 1 overall] was exciting. It was a culmination of a lifelong dream," said Bartkowski. "Ever since I was six years old I wanted to be a professional athlete. I didn't know whether it was going to be football or baseball but I knew it would be one of them."

During his time at the University of California, Berkeley, Bartkowski threw for 4,434 yards over the course of three seasons. He led the nation in passing his senior year with 2,580 yards with 12 touchdowns. He was named a consensus All-American his senior year and showcased his athletic ability in the spring by adding All-America baseball honors as a first-baseman for the Golden Bears.

LEADING A FRANCHISE

After Bartkowski was drafted and the excitement wore off, he knew the task would be a tall one. He was headed to a Falcons organization that only had two winning seasons in nine years. They needed Bartkowski to help turn the franchise around after coming off of a 3-11 record in 1974. As history tells us, he was the right man for the job. In his first season at the helm he threw for 1,662 yards and was named Rookie of the Year by Pro Football Weekly/Pro Football Writers Association and Sporting News.

The offensive struggled in the 1977 season, but Atlanta boasted arguably one of the best defenses in league history that earned the nickname 'The Gritz Blitz'. The unit allowed only 129 points in their 14-game season. The mark of 9.2 points allowed per game is the best in modern NFL history.

"They were fun to watch," said Bartkowski. "They were flying around, it was exciting to be on that football team with the kind of guys we had playing. There weren't any stars, just a collective group with a lot of interchangeable pieces, just getting it done week in and week out."

Bartkowski solidified his role as starting quarterback in 1978 and led the organization to its first playoff appearance and playoff win. In the opening round of the 1978 playoffs the

Falcons defeated the Philadelphia Eagles 14-13 behind Bartkowski's two touchdown passes in the final five minutes. Atlanta lost to Dallas 27-20 in the Divisional Round.

The 1978 and 1979 seasons proved to be the launching pad for Bartkowski's career and in 1980 he threw for 3,544 yards and tossed a career-high 31 touchdowns. That year would lead to Atlanta's first division title in franchise history but another Divisional Round exit. Bartkowski knows 1980 was a missed opportunity but he gives high praise to the guys that were around him:

HAVING THE RIGHT HANDS

"One of the greatest assets I had was my receiving core that I played with," said Bartkowski. "Alfred Jenkins who was 5-foot-8, 145 pounds and was a solid competitive player. There was just nobody that could do what Alfred [Jenkins] could do on the football field. We were fortunate to have a supporting cast with Wallace Francis and Alfred Jackson along with Billy Ryckman. When Junior Miller came along he was one of the most talented tight ends I've ever been around, maybe that I've ever been on the field with. Guys like Buddy Curry, Tom Pridemore, Jeff Mellow those were workaday guys on the other side of the ball. I knew they were incredible leaders and would set the bar for everyone around them. We had a good supporting cast, it still irks me that we weren't able to close the deal in 1980. We had the best team in the League that year. I don't think anyone would dispute that including the Dallas Cowboys who beat us."

Throughout Bartkowski's career he just wanted to be dependable, work hard and earn the respect of the fans supporting the team. He did all of those things while leading a franchise to places it had never been. He was honored by the Falcons in 2004 with an induction into the prestigious Ring of Honor.

"It was really cool, I think there's a lot of reasons that you play the game. More so than ever now money is one of them, but it was never a motivator for me," explained Bartkowski. "Respectability, to be the kind of teammate that could be counted on to give you everything he had every Sunday. To set the bar in such a way that your teammates followed and that was always the most important thing to me. To have my caricature hanging from the Dome was just icing on the cake for me that you did a pretty good job with what you had."

SELFLESS STAR STILL TOPS RECORD BOOKS

By Kyle Sandy

A changing of the guard took place in the early 1980's for the Atlanta Falcons. With Steve Bartkowski entering his twilight years, then head coach Leeman Bennett elected to start running the ball more with All-Pro back William Andrews. By the time the 1982 NFL Draft rolled around, the Falcons held the ninth overall pick and surprised many, including future all-time leading rusher in franchise history, Gerald Riggs, when the bruising back out of Arizona State was selected.

Riggs recalled draft day. "I think at that time, certainly being the ninth pick, it was a big surprise to me. We didn't have the draft all day stuff like they do now, so with that being the case it was a big surprise because I never spoke with anyone from the Falcons."

The West Coast was home for Riggs growing up at Bonanza High School in Las Vegas, Nevada. As an Arizona State Sun Devil, Riggs was notorious for busting big plays through the middle of the line and was proficient catching the ball out of the backfield. When all was said and done, Riggs totaled 2,086 yards rushing and 17 touchdowns while catching 50 balls for 550 yards over his college career.

Prior to Riggs joining Atlanta, William Andrews had accumulated three-consecutive Pro Bowl appearances and left the incoming rookie wondering what his role would be.

"Coming to Atlanta I didn't know how I would fit because I was a fullback and they just had a player at the time named All-Pro, in William Andrews," admitted Riggs.

The 1982 season was a players' strike reduced year which lasted only nine games. In those nine games, the young Riggs gained 299 yards, scored five rushing touchdowns and caught 23 passes as the Falcons finished 5-4 before losing in the Wild Card Round to the Minnesota Vikings.

ICONIC PLAYMAKERS

The Falcons didn't have the memorable winning percentage during the 1980's but when it came to one-of-a-kind talent, it was a golden age of great players that suited up for Atlanta.

"I don't think many people understand just how many All-Pros were on those teams in the early 80's," explained Riggs. "Jeff Van Note, R.C. Thielemann, Mike Kenn, Alfred Jenkins, Alfred Jackson, Junior Miller, that's just one team that was a plethora of guys who were great players and that team itself was pretty special."

Riggs got his big break his third year in the League. Andrews had come off a career year with over 1,500 yards rushing but badly

injured his knee in the preseason of 1984. That injury opened the door for Riggs and he made the most of his opportunity. He would rush for 1,486 yards and 13 scores and followed up his first year as a starter with a league-high 397 carries and 1,719 yards. During his seven-year career with the Falcons, he would tally up a franchise record of 6,631 yards – a record that still stands to this day, 27 years later.

He pinned his success on others throughout his career.

"I really attribute my success to [head coach] Dan Henning coming in and bringing in the one back offense he had when he was with the Washington Redskins and it gave me the ability to be on the field and do the things I was capable of doing," explained Riggs.

From 1985 to 1987, Riggs enjoyed three straight Pro Bowl selections. His first selection was special to him for being able to talk to veterans like Walter Payton, but also see young superstars Reggie White and Lawrence Taylor just reach their prime.

REMEMBERING BIG BEN

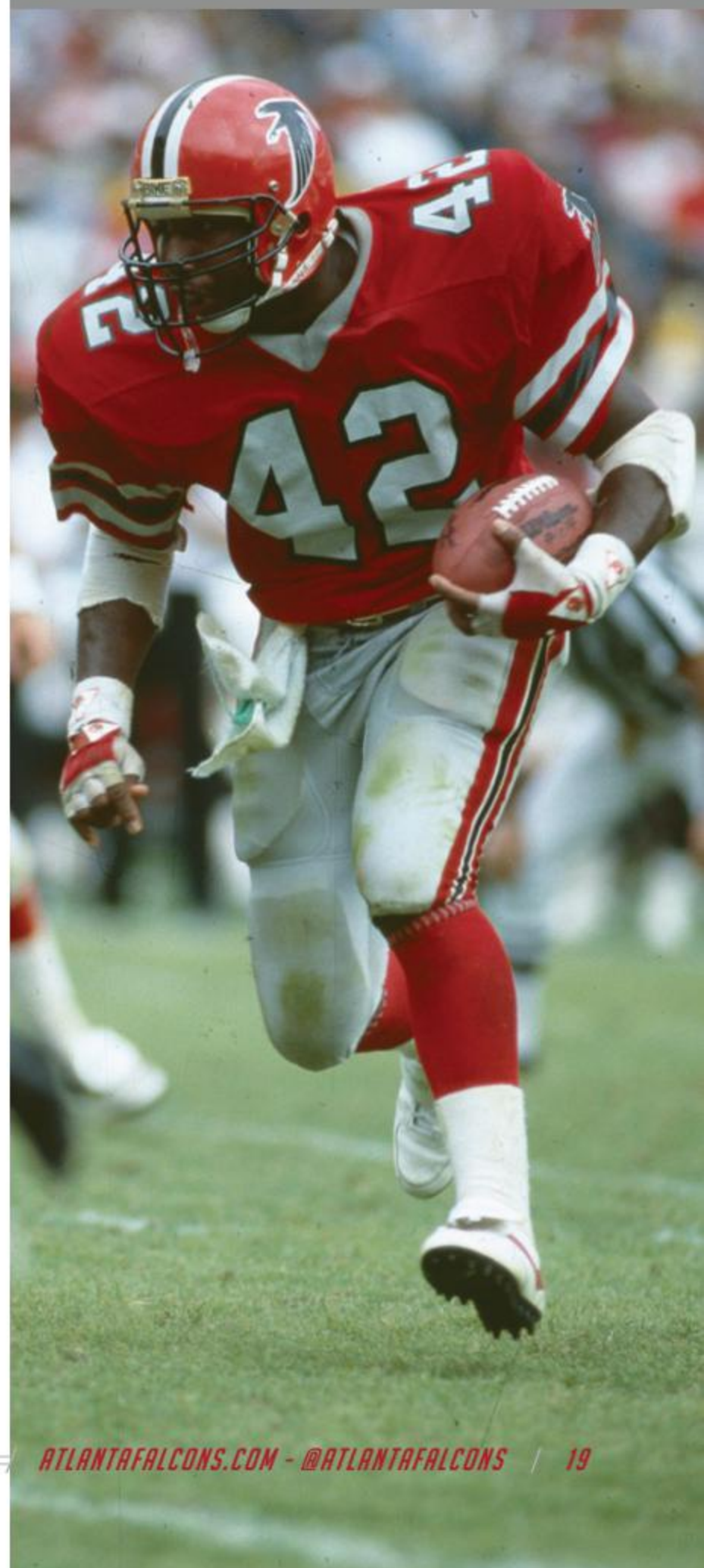
His greatest memory with the Falcons is one all Atlanta fans recognize; Steve Bartkowski's 'Big Ben' hail mary to Billy "White Shoes" Johnson to beat the 49ers 28-24 in 1983. "That is still one of the times I remember the most. I still remember that game and trying to make a difference on that play. I think it will go down as one of the greatest plays in Falcons history."

Riggs' Falcons career ended in 1989 when he was traded to the Washington Redskins. He would finish his career with a storybook ending, winning Super Bowl XXVI and scoring two touchdowns on the ground. In his final season, he became a short yardage specialist, carrying the ball just 78 times but scoring 11 touchdowns.

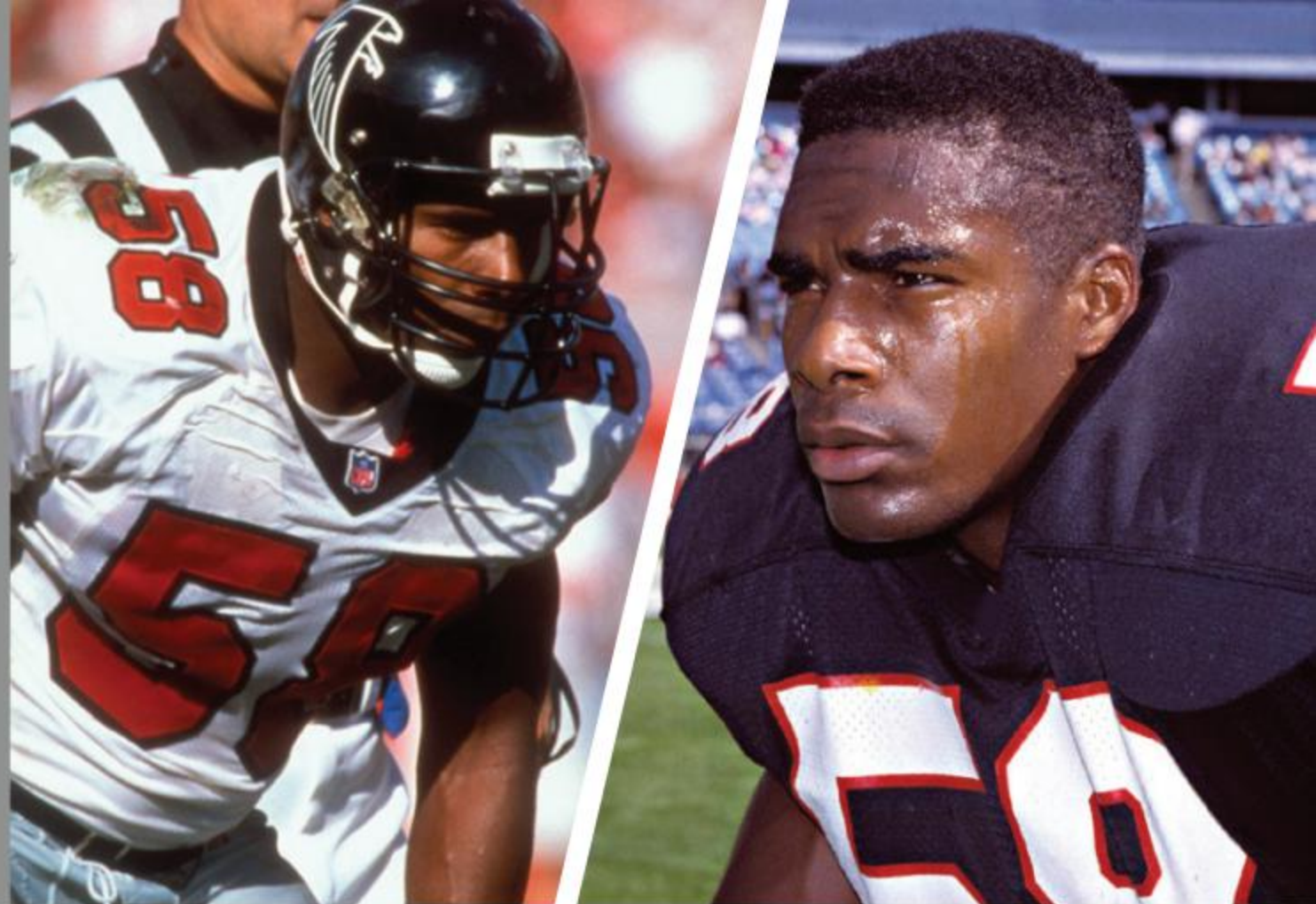
In 2013, the 10-year veteran was inducted into the Falcons Ring of Honor, sharing the honor with teammates Steve Bartkowski, William Andrews, Jessie Tuggle, Van Note and Mike Kenn.

"It was very sweet. Sometimes you don't know if your efforts are really paid attention to," said Riggs. "For someone to say let's recognize Gerald Riggs for what he did. That's pretty special. It'll always be a pretty sweet place in my heart and in my mind and I still remember when they announced it. It wasn't about my efforts as much it was about the guys I played with, because I couldn't have done anything without them."

ATLANTA FALCONS == IN THE == 80s



ATLANTA FALCONS == IN THE == 90s



TUGGLE'S TOUGHNESS PROPELS HIM TO BECOMING ALL-TIME GREAT

By Josh Reich

In the 1987 NFL Draft, 335 players were selected. Jessie Tuggle was not one of them. Not a single team was willing to take a chance on a 5-foot-11 linebacker out of Valdosta State. The Atlanta Falcons signed him as an undrafted free agent and Tuggle would impress everyone in training camp and never look back. He would go on to play 14 years in the League, all for the Falcons. From his rookie campaign to his farewell tour in 2000, he was a mainstay at middle-linebacker collecting the most tackles in the NFL from 1990-1999 with 1,293. He made a name for himself with his bone-jarring hits and the intensity he brought to the field every snap. When it was all said and done, Tuggle would be named to the Pro Bowl five times and named as an All-Pro in three separate seasons.

FULFILLING A DREAM

Tuggle was born in Spalding County, Ga. in 1965. He developed a passion for the game of football early on and blossomed into a menacing defensive player at Griffin High School, which has produced many NFL players over the years.

"I was named the MVP of the team my senior year, but I didn't get much interest from the bigger schools" Tuggle recalls. He chose to attend Valdosta State, a school that had only formed a football team in 1982. Tuggle was named as an All-American and he led the Blazers to their first winning season. Despite he and his team's success in college, he went undrafted, but his dream would come true when Atlanta decided to sign him as a free agent. "I grew up watching the Falcons so that was really special for me."

A DEFENSIVE MENTALITY

Although Tuggle did not have a prototypical linebacker's frame, he did have a prototypical mindset. "I looked at my height as an advantage. Football was a leverage game and my quickness and my strength were my biggest assets."

He first earned playing time as a special teams player and spent his first couple seasons with the team embracing and excelling in that role. By his third year he had earned a starting linebacker job. Tuggle described himself as "hard-nosed" and "naturally instinctive." It was these attributes that allowed him to propel his name to the top of the tackle leaderboards year in and year out. Everyone knows Tuggle by his nickname "The Hammer", but that actually wasn't his first nickname.

"When I first came in the League they called me 'Ragdoll' because of the way I just threw guys around" recalls Tuggle. "Then in practice one day I really let loose on somebody and a coach said 'you just got hit by the hammer', and that name stuck from there."

ROAD TO THE SUPER BOWL

In 1998, the Falcons made their first Super Bowl appearance in franchise history.

"That year really changed this franchise around," explained Tuggle. The Falcons won their first two games in 1998, but got beat by the 49ers in Week 3. "After that San Francisco game, we really got on a roll" remembers Tuggle.

He was right, as the Falcons would win five of their next six games, setting up a rematch with San

Francisco in Week 11. Including their Week 3 duel, the 49ers had won five straight contests with the Falcons. In front of 70,000-plus fans at the Georgia Dome, the Falcons reversed the curse and beat Steve Young, Jerry Rice and crew 31-19. The Atlanta defense, led by The Hammer, held the 'Niners to just 76 yards on the ground. Tuggle scooped up a fumble and returned it for a touchdown early in the fourth quarter to put Atlanta up 24-6. They beat the 49ers again in the Divisional Round and faced off with the Vikings in the NFC Championship. Tuggle remembered this matchup as 'the most exciting game I've ever played.' Morten Andersen kicked a 38-yard game-winning field goal in overtime, propelling Atlanta to a Super Bowl XXXIII berth.

PASSING THE TORCH

When Tuggle was drafted, Falcons legend Tommy Nobis was on the front office staff. "Tommy was always upstairs and always had great advice," said Tuggle. When the Falcons drafted Keith Brooking in 1998, Tuggle played a similar role for Brooking, passing the torch to the Georgia Tech product that like Tuggle, would make five Pro Bowls. Grady Jarrett, Tuggle's youngest son, will start his own journey with the Falcons this season after getting picked up in the fifth-round of this year's draft. His older son, Justin Tuggle, is a third-year linebacker for the Houston Texans. The Falcons host the Texans in Week 4 of the 2015 season and Tuggle is certainly looking forward to the matchup. "That will be pretty special," said Tuggle. "Both of them being on the field and my jersey swinging in the rafters."

ATLANTA FALCONS == IN THE == 00s



CRUMPLER BECOMES LEADING TARGET IN ATLANTA'S EXPLOSIVE OFFENSE

By Avi Goodfriend

Throughout the 2000s, Alge Crumpler was a mainstay of dependability. Over his seven seasons with the team, Crumpler caught 316 passes for 4,212 yards and 35 touchdowns. A fan favorite, he always seemed to make a play when the Falcons needed it and he will go down as one of the greatest tight ends in franchise history. Alge was a premier blocking and catching tight end, making it to four consecutive Pro Bowls from 2003-06. He currently ranks eighth among the all-time receiving yardage leaders in franchise history and finished his pro career with 4,743 yards after short stints in Tennessee and New England where he was brought in to mentor the likes of Rob Gronkowski and Jared Cook.

LEARNING THE GAME

Algernon Crumpler, born on Dec. 23, 1977 in Greenville, North Carolina, was named after his father's favorite book, 'Flowers for Algernon'. Carlester Crumpler Sr. played six years in the NFL and was inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, giving his son some large shoes to fill. At New Hanover High School, Alge led the team in tackles averaging 11 a game and played every position except quarterback and guard on offense.

Crumpler played his college ball at the University of North Carolina, where he scored All-ACC honors from 1998-2000 and collected 68 receptions for 800 yards and six total scores over his career. The former Tarheel was drafted in the second round of the 2001 NFL draft as the 35th overall pick. The Falcons first draftee in that class was the electrifying quarterback out of Virginia Tech, Michael Vick, whom they traded up for and selected with the

top overall pick. As soon as they hit the field together, Crumpler knew that he needed to be prepared for whatever his quarterback might do.

"The NFL prepares you to be ready for everything, so I knew how to adjust," he explained. "Michael played the game with a very high level of excitement and it was our job as players around him to match that excitement."

Because of the personnel that the Falcons already had in their backfield, the fact that Vick was a huge rushing threat made the running game for the Falcons nearly unstoppable. Many looked at it as a three-headed monster, in Vick, T.J. Duckett and Warrick Dunn. Having such a productive running game with a tight end of Crumpler's caliber led to many open looks in the passing game.

"It certainly helped in the play-action game," said Crumpler. "We could run the ball against anybody we felt like. Warrick was such a dynamic player, running screens and draws. T.J. Duckett was strong on the goal line. We left defenses wondering what was coming next. I was left with wide open field most of the time." Some of the Falcons most explosive play were play-action rollouts to the left with Crumpler running along the seam.

A BLOCKING MACHINE

Early on in his career, Crumpler was seen mainly as a pass-catching tight end. As his career progressed in Atlanta's explosive running attack, he became more known for his blocking prowess as well. By the end of his career, he credits blocking for his last few years with Tennessee and New England. "Blocking is important," explained Crumpler. "Mike Tice once told me, 'tight ends that can catch will

play in this league, but tight ends that can block play for 10 years'. It wasn't until my later years when I became a truly physical blocker and I think that's the reason I was able to extend my career."

WINNING WAYS

After Atlanta's historic 1998 season, the team suffered through seasons of 5-11 and 4-12 before drafting Crumpler in 2001. He enjoyed two playoff trips with the Falcons coming in 2002 and 2004, while leading the team in receiving three straight years from 2004-06.

Known as one of the team's toughest and most durable players, Crumpler showed his mettle during the 2004 season's playoff run. Battling an injury, he missed the final two games of the regular season, but knew he would be ready for the NFC Divisional Round. "I was anxious to get going in the playoffs," explained Crumpler. "Those were the first two games I had ever missed in my career." Crumpler capped off a five-play scoring drive with an 18-yard touchdown reception to open the game and set the tone as Atlanta cruised into its first NFC Championship since 1998 with a 47-17 rout of the St. Louis Rams.

From the moment he stepped on the field donning the No. 83, Alge Crumpler was a difference maker for a franchise welcoming a new millennium. After retiring, Crumpler quickly got into TV and radio and enjoyed co-hosting Falcons game day shows and also a brief morning show which was featured on 790 The Zone along with co-host JP Peterson. Most recently he has worked with the ACC Network and still carries his Tarheel and Falcon pride everywhere he goes.

ATLANTA FALCONS — IN THE — 10s



RYAN'S IMMEDIATE IMPACT, A START TO A RECORD-SETTING CAREER

By Brian Jones

After the 2007 season, the Falcons were at a crossroads. They were looking for a new head coach, a new general manager and a new face of the franchise. So they started rebuilding as they hired a new head coach, Thomas Dimitroff came in as the new general manager and with the Falcons having the third overall pick in the 2008 NFL Draft, they selected Matt Ryan from Boston College.

Ryan was coming off a successful career with the Eagles as he led them to 2007 ACC Championship game and was also named 2007 ACC Offensive Player of the Year. He also won the Manning Award, the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award and he was a first team All-American.

MAKING A SPLASH

In the first game of the 2008 season, the Falcons took on the Detroit Lions and Ryan was named the starter. It did not take long for the first-timer to settle in and his first throw went for a 62-yard touchdown to Michael Jenkins.

From there, Ryan was able to lead the Falcons to an 11-5 record and a wild card spot in the NFL playoffs, which was the first time since 2004 that the Falcons earned a spot in postseason play.

Despite losing to the Arizona Cardinals in the wild-card round, it was a very successful season for the Falcons and gave the franchise momentum moving forward. Ryan ended the year with 3,440 yards, 17 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. He became the second rookie quarterback in the NFL to throw for over 3,000 yards in a season and he was named AP NFL Rookie of the Year.

In 2009, Ryan dealt with turf toe but was able to return to the lineup for the final three games of the season, and helped the Falcons finish with a 9-7 record, marking Atlanta's first-ever back-to-back winning seasons.

In the 2010 season, Ryan led Atlanta to a 13-3 regular season and top seed in the playoffs. He finished with 3,705 passing yards, 28 touchdowns and just nine interceptions. He also set career highs in completion percentage (62.5), attempts (357) and wins in a season (13). Ryan was able to lead the Falcons to the playoffs for the second consecutive year in 2011. Atlanta would fall to the Giants in the first round but Ryan's season

saw more improvement. He threw for 4,177 yards (the first time Ryan threw for 4,000 yards in a season), 29 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. He completed 61 percent of his passes and finished with a QB rating of 92.2.

If there is one season that stands out in Ryan's career, to this point, it would have to be the 2012 season. Ryan was able to lead the Falcons to an 8-0 start, the best in franchise history. The Falcons finished the season with a 13-3 mark and a No. 1 seed in the playoffs. He was able to win his first playoff game as he led the Falcons in a comeback win against the Seattle Seahawks in the divisional round of the playoffs. The Falcons came up a few yards short against the San Francisco 49ers in the NFC Championship game, but Ryan had a strong showing in the playoffs and it was his best season from a statistical standpoint. He finished the 2012 season with 4,719 yards, 32 touchdowns and 14 interceptions. He also set franchise records with 68.6 completion percentage and 422 completions. He was invited to his second Pro Bowl and ranked No. 17 in the NFL Network's Top 100 Players in the NFL in 2013.

FIGHTING THROUGH

The 2013 season suffered with a string of injuries to both sides of the football and resulted in a 4-12 mark. However, it still was a strong season for Ryan as he threw for 4,515 yards, 26 touchdowns and 17 interceptions. He had a QB rating of 89.6 and completed 66 percent of his passes.

Last season, Ryan threw for 4,694 yards and 28 touchdowns with 14 interceptions. He was invited to his third Pro Bowl. Since his career began in 2008, Ryan has established himself as one of the best signal callers in the NFL and he has also made a case as one of the best players in franchise history.

Ryan already is the all-time franchise leader in passing yards, touchdowns and QB rating. He has 66 career wins, and his 56 wins in his first five years are the most by any quarterback in NFL history.

The record book has Ryan's name written in it already and there is no question his impact on the franchise since arriving in 2008. He has proven his ability to improve year-to-year and has the combination of skill and consistency to lead the franchise to the high-level of success it craves.



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FALCONS LAND GAME-CHANGING PASS RUSHER WITH VIC BEASLEY

By Craig Sager II

The Atlanta Falcons welcomed Vic Beasley Jr. into the professional limelight with the No. 8 overall pick of this year's draft. The pass rusher's record-setting career at Clemson, All-America accolades and freakish athleticism were admired before he arrived at pre-draft combines and the unanimity of his status as one of the most sought after prospects of this year's draft class was never in question. With extraordinary first-step quickness, speed and power, rushing the passer appears natural to Beasley. His football journey, however, reveals how impressive the 23-year-old's accomplishments and skillsets really are.

Every player that completes the climb to the prestigious platform of the NFL followed his own unique path that got him there. Beasley has had the dream of making it to the NFL since he was a kid, but even he could never have imagined it would unfold the way it has.

COMING HOME

"I thought I was going to be some other position," admitted Beasley. "I wouldn't have believed that [I'd be a pass rusher] at all. I just knew I had the potential to play in the NFL and I never saw myself being here in Atlanta. Fortunately I was able to come here and it worked out for me. I'm glad to be here at home."

During his career at Adairsville High School, an hour north of Atlanta, Beasley played running back and returned kicks while leading the defense at linebacker. His athleticism attracted plenty of collegiate fan mail and after signing with Clemson without an established position, he had to pursue

a role on the field that could take full advantage of his wide range of skills. After getting red-shirted his freshman year and trying everything from tight end to running back with the Tigers, he was finally slotted as a pass rusher going into his sophomore season. Using his athleticism to attack opponents' backfields paid off and Beasley wrapped up his career with back-to-back first team All-American honors and an ACC Defensive Player of the Year award in 2014. He earned the eternal status of a being a first-round pick with his hometown Falcons and brought the excitement of an elite pass rusher that the franchise and city has been waiting for.

SHARPENING SKILLS

Beasley's father, Vic Beasley Sr., played safety at Auburn from 1982-84 and set an example for a young and motivated Beasley Jr. as his high school football career took flight at Adairsville. As a senior, Beasley played running back, where he would tote 120 carries for 828 yards and seven scores. He added an 80-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and two punt return touchdowns that same season and on the defensive side of the ball notched 102 tackles, 12 tackles for loss and an interception. Beasley excelled on the football field and also averaged a double-double on the hardwood for his high school basketball team and in AAU for the Georgia All-Stars in the offseason.

These busy high school playing days mark when Beasley applied the importance of putting the team first and where he recognized the hard work and determination that he would need to make his

dream of playing in the NFL a reality.

"In high school the most important thing I learned was just the grind of everything," explained Beasley. "The grind from high school into college really paid off."

The wide range of athletic skills and versatility to play almost any position earned Beasley's status as one of the top prep athletes in the nation before he narrowed down his college choices and signed with Clemson. The fresh start forced Beasley to practice and study a variety of different positions and this challenged him in ways that continue to help him today as he adapts to a new role with the Falcons.

"Playing those different positions throughout my career in high school and college challenged me," admitted Beasley during minicamp. "But as a result I'm adapting fast now [to the NFL] and can enjoy the process."

A DEFENSIVE DESTINY

After giving offense a try the first year, the Clemson coaching staff welcomed Beasley to defensive end. Beasley would hop in on special teams while playing a limited pass rushing role during that 2011 campaign. The reps came with valuable experience that began laying the foundation that would sprout his growth as a pass rusher.

NFL talent surrounded Beasley throughout his college career. Beasley saw former Clemson and current Falcons teammate Malliciah Goodman get drafted by Atlanta in 2013. In 2014, receiver Sammy Watkins joined Buffalo in the first round with the No. 4 pick and quarterback Tajh Boyd (now with



Pittsburgh) was picked up in the sixth round. Beasley shined while competing with college football's top talent but his growth into an elite NFL prospect required a level of patience and determination that his college coach Dabo Swinney admires.

"With (C.J.) Spiller and Sammy (Watkins), it came fast," Swinney told Greenville Online right before this year's draft. "They were great right out of the gate; they got off the bus and were great, whereas for Vic...it was a different journey for him... I'm so proud of him because I know how far he's come and he deserves all the credit because of the work he's put in."

Beasley earned more playing time in the offseason leading up to the 2012 season and would take a dozen snaps in the season opener against Auburn on Aug. 1 in the Chick-Fil-A Kickoff Game.

This showdown with his dad's alma mater took place in the Beasley's home state at the Georgia Dome and it would prove to be a memorable day. On a critical third down during Auburn's last drive, Beasley registered his first college sack on a scrambling Kiehl Frazier and shut down the potential game-tying drive as Clemson held on for a 26-19 victory.

The 2014 ACC Defensive Player of the Year would record 32 more sacks by the end of his career, finishing with a school-record 33. Beasley's senior season ended with the Tigers' 40-6 blowout Citrus Bowl win over Oklahoma on Dec. 29. Along with his 33 career sacks, Beasley totaled 101 tackles, 52.5 tackles for loss, 29 quarterback pressures, 11 pass breakups, seven forced fumbles, two recovered fumbles and two touchdowns in 1,421 snaps over 48 games (25 starts). He posted at least one sack in eight consecutive games from the end of the 2013 season and into the start of 2014 and was involved in a tackle for loss in each of his last 15 games.

WELCOME HOME

While the Falcons waited for the franchise's next great pass rusher to come along, Beasley's reputation as one the League's next class of elite pass rushers was growing. Pre-draft analysts dissected his game. The technique and consistency he developed under his college position coach Marion Hobby was impressive but when coaches included the fact the Beasley was still relatively new to the position into their film study it was even more appealing.

His stock entering the 2014 draft was also at its peak because of a decision made before his senior season to not enter the draft when interests began to spring up following his All-American 2013 campaign. Beasley was committed to staying in school for his final year of eligibility and finishing his sociology degree so he could graduate.

"Growing up, my mom and dad always pushed academics," Beasley said. "No one in our house had ever gotten a college degree and I wanted to be the first to do that. That was my main goal."

GEORGIA PRIDE

Beasley was the first of 30 former Georgia high school football players that were taken in this year's draft, second only to Florida's 39. Being the first of these 30 players and getting to stay in-state and represent his home team will be a privilege Beasley is looking forward carrying into his professional career.

"Being from Georgia definitely means a lot," said Beasley. "There are a lot of expectations with me playing for Atlanta and I just have to do my best and play for this team."

The Falcons were able to add a second Georgia-product in the fifth round of this year's draft with defensive tackle Grady Jarrett. The Rockdale County alum is the son of Falcons legend and Ring of Honor member Jessie Tuggle. Like Jarrett, Beasley grew up a Falcons fan and the two became close friends and an unstoppable force while playing together at Clemson. Bringing in hometown guys is exciting for the fans of any franchise and Dan Quinn is also looking forward to this.

"I think it's awesome to have a guy who grew up a Falcons fan and wants to be here," smiled Quinn.

Beasley recognizes the additional pressure some might see with his status as a first round pick and that he is playing for the team he grew up cheering for. However, he recognizes that the system in place in Atlanta and the type of environment the Falcons are providing him will be able to bring out his best.

"Dan Quinn is a defensive-minded coach and just having him in my corner is certainly a benefit of the team," said Beasley.

The Falcons had plans to bring in Beasley if the opportunity presented itself and were ecstatic when the pieces fell into place on draft day and he was still available with the No. 8 pick.

"Beasley's first step quickness is what makes him what he is," explained Quinn. "We were focused on Vic [Beasley] from the very beginning," added Falcons GM Thomas Dimitroff, "I'm glad we didn't have to get antsy to jump up to get him."

Beasley's burst and quickness off the ball is exactly what defenses look for in a pass rusher and not only does he begin the play with a burst, but he follows it up with excellent hand placement and leverage. His technique and athleticism blend to a point where at times it can appear almost effortless, but years of taking reps at a variety of positions has certainly helped his ability to adapt and make plays.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Football appreciates what the names, numbers and logos on a jersey represent much more than the physical digits, letters and designs themselves. Beasley will wear No. 44 with the Falcons, a jersey number he picked to represent being the eighth pick of the draft (4+4=8). When understanding his journey to the Falcons, the No. 44 seen on the field reveals the story. It displays the hard work it took to become a top 8 pick. It shows a childhood dream coming true every time he takes the field and it shows the honor of playing for the team he grew up cheering for.

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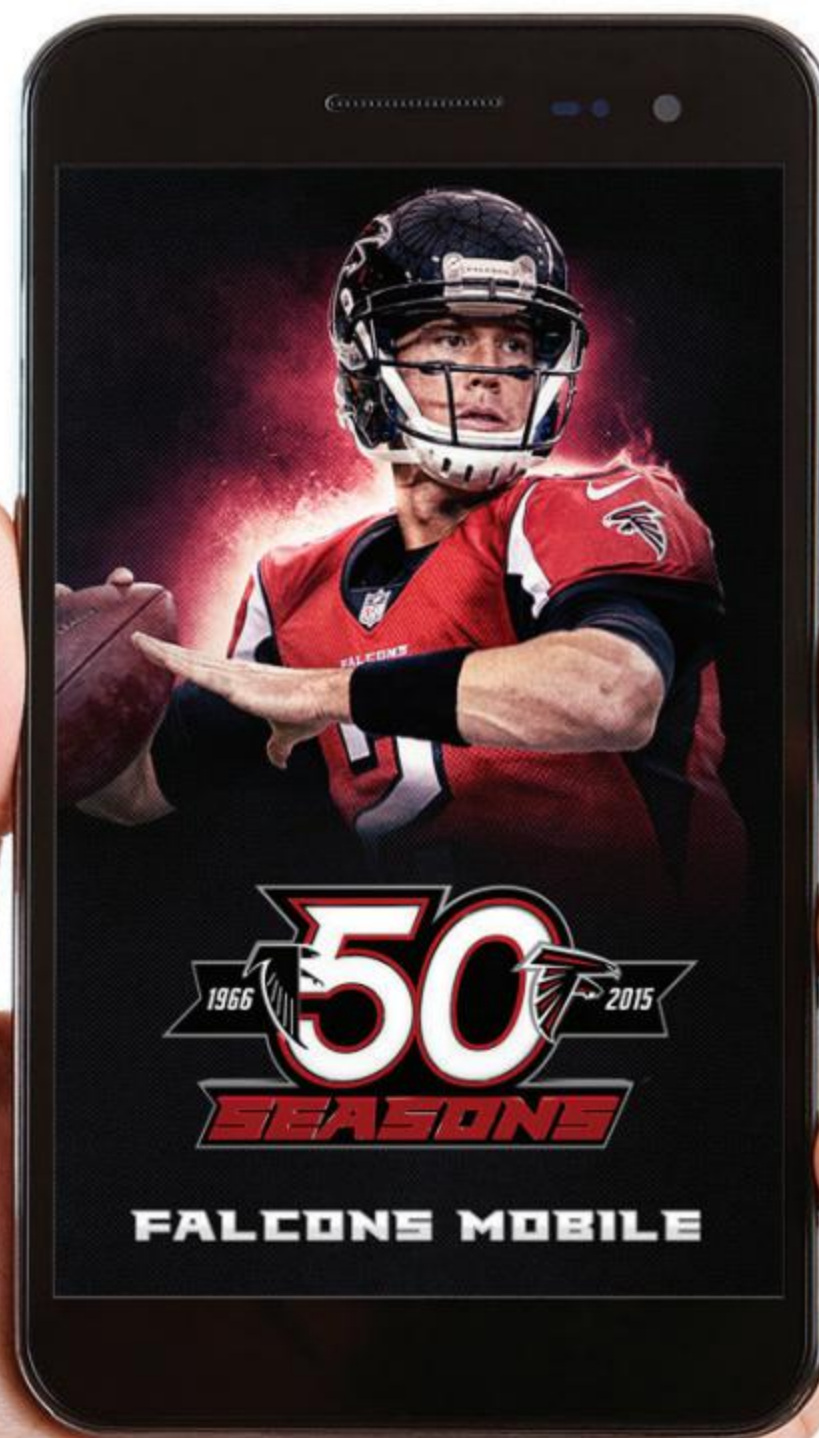
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FALCONS OPPONENTS

The Dan Quinn era kicks off in primetime with a Monday Night Football showdown. Atlanta will play the weakest schedule in the entire NFL with its opponents combining for a .409 winning percentage last season.

By Kyle Sandy



TENNESSEE TITANS

2-14 IN 2014



AUG. 14 HOME
PRESEASON
OCT. 25 AWAY

SERIES
Tennessee leads 3-1 in
regular season meetings
LAST MEETING
2011 - Falcons won 23-17
STADIUM
Nissan (69,143)

Atlanta and Tennessee meet in the preseason for the third consecutive year as both teams ready themselves for the 2015 season after making big changes. The Titans decided to draft quarterback Marcus Mariota second overall in this year's draft. Mariota shined at Oregon and won the Heisman Trophy in 2014 and will bring a quick release and deadly feet to coach Ken Wisenhunt's offense.

Tennessee made some big splashes by signing veteran wide receiver Hakeem Nicks to give Mariota a big target to throw to. They also brought in longtime Falcon and slot ace, Harry Douglas. Linebacker Brian Orakpo inked a deal and is hoping to regain his Pro Bowl form after injuries have derailed him in recent years.

The Titans have come away victorious the past two years in the preseason, highlighted by Zach Mettenberger leading a comeback in 2014 to beat Atlanta 24-17. Roddy White burned Tennessee in their last regular season meeting when he caught seven balls for 147 yards in a 23-17 victory in 2011.



NEW YORK JETS

4-12 IN 2014



AUG. 21 AWAY
PRESEASON

SERIES
Falcons lead 6-5 in regular
season meetings
LAST MEETING
2013 - New York won 30-28
STADIUM
MetLife (82,566)

Rex Ryan is out and Todd Bowles is in. Bowles was pegged as the new leader of the team and brings over the same defensive mindset that Ryan had. Bowles helped mold the Arizona Cardinals into one of the best defenses in the league over the past two years and was rewarded by being named the AP's Assistant Coach of the Year in 2014.

New General Manager Mike Maccagnan has been aggressive in his first year with the team bringing in the likes of running back Stevan Ridley and wide receiver Brandon Marshall. Corners Darrelle Revis and Antonio Cromartie were also brought back and give the Jets one of the most feared defenses on paper. Rookie defensive tackle Leonard Williams dropped to sixth overall and will line up with an already loaded front four.

Quarterback still remains the biggest question with Geno Smith competing with Ryan Fitzpatrick to start. Smith had his best professional game in 2013 when he threw for three touchdowns and led the Jets to a last-second Monday Night Football win in Atlanta.



MIAMI DOLPHINS

8-8 IN 2014



AUG. 29 AWAY
PRESEASON

SERIES

Miami leads 8-4 in regular season meetings

LAST MEETING

2013 - Miami won 27-23

STADIUM

Sun Life (75,540)

Head Coach Joe Philbin hopes that this year Miami will finally break out of the doldrums of being a .500 team that has not made the playoffs since 2008. Ryan Tannehill has taken strides each year and looks like a franchise quarterback. He threw for 4,045 yards and 27 touchdowns in 2014 and was rewarded with a four-year contract extension.

Ndamukong Suh signed a hefty six-year, \$114 million contract with \$60 million guaranteed this offseason, making him the highest-paid defensive player in NFL history. Jordan Cameron and Kenny Stills are also new additions which should help the continued growth of Tannehill.

The Dolphins lead the all-time regular season series with Atlanta 8-4 and won their last meeting back in 2013, 27-23. Tannehill connected with tight end Dion Sims for a 1-yard score with 38 seconds left to lift the Fins over Atlanta. The Falcons beat Miami 16-10 in last year's opening preseason game. Tannehill and Matt Ryan combined to go a perfect 13-of-13 passing in limited action.



BALTIMORE RAVENS

10-6 IN 2014



SEPT. 3 HOME
PRESEASON

SERIES

Baltimore leads 3-2 in regular season meetings

LAST MEETING

2014 - Baltimore won 29-7

STADIUM

M&T Bank (71,008)

Baltimore handled a tumultuous season the best they could. Ray Rice was suspended after a cringe-worthy incident in an elevator with his wife. Running back Justin Forsett stepped up big time in Rice's absence and ran away with the starting job, rushing for 1,266 yards and eight touchdowns.

Marc Trestman takes over as offensive coordinator after the Chicago Bears failed to make the playoffs under his guidance. Joe Flacco should benefit from the new addition and looks to improve upon his 3,986 yards passing and 27 touchdowns in 2014. Steve Smith Sr. hauled in 1,065 yards receiving but at age 36, father time may be catching up. Haloti Ngata was traded to Detroit and leaves an opening for Timmy Jernigan, who played well as a rookie picking up four sacks.

The Ravens shutdown Atlanta last year 29-7 and harassed Matt Ryan with five sacks on the day. Forsett gained 95 yards on the ground while Flacco tossed two touchdowns. Cornerback Robert Alford burnt Flacco twice with two interceptions.



PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

10-6 IN 2014



SEPT. 14 HOME

SERIES

Philadelphia leads 12-15-1

LAST MEETING

2012 - Falcons won 30-17

STADIUM

Lincoln Financial Field (69,176)

The Falcons kickoff the regular season on Monday Night Football in the Georgia Dome against the Eagles yet again, after the two teams opened up 2005 in the same fashion. Atlanta won 14-10 and saw Warick Dunn rush for 117 yards.

Head coach Chip Kelly has been in the headlines all offseason for his evil genius approach to constructing a favorable roster. LeSean McCoy, Jeremy Maclin, Cary Williams, Trent Cole and Nick Foles are all gone. Sam Bradford, Kiko Alonso, Miles Austin, DeMarco Murray, Ryan Matthews and Walter Thurmond all enter the fold as the Philadelphia revolving door continues to swirl.

With Kelly at the helm of the fast pace offense, the Eagles should have no problems scoring the ball with their shiny new toys. The defense ranked 28th last year but has a plethora of new faces to shore up that side of the ball.

Matt Ryan tossed three touchdowns and threw for 262 yards in a 30-17 victory in 2012, the two teams' last meeting. Julio Jones racked up 123 yards receiving.



NEW YORK GIANTS

6-10 IN 2014



SEPT. 20 AWAY

SERIES

Tied 11-11

LAST MEETING

2014 - New York won 30-20

STADIUM

MetLife (82,566)

The Giants will host Atlanta for the second straight season and the winner will break an 11-11 all-time series tie. New York scored 20 unanswered points to run away with the win last year, 30-20. Injuries to the running game derailed a chance at finding a groove. Rashad Jennings was effective when healthy and totaled 639 yards rushing while Andre Williams picked up the slack as a rookie and toted the rock 217 times for 721 yards.

Eli Manning had a bounce back season after throwing 27 interceptions in 2013. The two-time Super Bowl champ threw for 4,410 yards and 30 touchdowns compared to 14 interceptions. Ben McAdoo's West Coast offense benefited Manning and should manage to put up even more points this year with a healthy set of backs and receivers.

Odell Beckham Jr. stole the show and won Rookie of the Year with his incredible catches and cashed in by becoming the Madden cover boy. With 91 catches and 12 touchdowns in just 12 games, the sky is the limit for ODB if he can stay healthy.



DALLAS COWBOYS

12-4 IN 2014



SEPT. 27 AWAY

SERIES
Dallas leads 14-9

LAST MEETING
2012 - Falcons won 19-13

STADIUM
AT&T (105,000)

Dallas exceeded expectations last year and nearly made it into the conference championship. The offensive line emerged as the best in the NFL and helped DeMarco Murray rush for a League-best 1,845 yards and 13 touchdowns. Zack Martin, Travis Frederick and Tyron Smith all were honored as Pro Bowlers and will try to recreate their success with a new set of backs highlighted by Darren McFadden after Murray bolted to Philadelphia.

Current Falcon Justin Durant was having a career year anchoring the linebacker position but went down with a biceps tear. Sean Lee returns healthy after missing all of last season with a torn ACL and should thrive in Rod Marinelli's defense.

Tony Romo threw 34 touchdowns to just nine interceptions a year ago and hopes favorite target Dez Bryant will continue his yeoman's work after snagging a League-high 16 touchdowns. Dallas leads the series 14-9 but Atlanta won the last meeting in 2012, 19-13, with Roddy White and Julio Jones combining for 247 yards receiving.



HOUSTON TEXANS

9-7 IN 2014



OCT. 4 HOME

SERIES
Houston leads 2-1

LAST MEETING
2011 - Houston won 17-10

STADIUM
NRG (71,054)

The Texans narrowly missed out on a playoff berth in a year that was filled with injuries. Ryan Fitzpatrick, Case Keenum and Ryan Mallett all started under center and did the best they could. Fitzpatrick, now with the Jets, was the most effective in 12 games throwing 17 touchdowns and eight interceptions. He had a game for the record books against the Titans in which he threw for six touchdowns and 358 yards.

Bill O'Brien enters his second season as head coach and will need a contribution from 2014 No. 1 pick Jadeveon Clowney. The coveted linebacker appeared in just four games before undergoing microfracture surgery. Vince Wilfork is a massive addition to the defensive line and will bring a winning pedigree. Offensively, Mallett and newly acquired Brian Hoyer will battle for the starting job.

It will be just the fourth meeting between Atlanta and Houston. The Texans edged the Falcons 17-10 in 2011 with current Falcon backup T.J. Yates throwing for 188 yards and one score in the win.



WASHINGTON REDSKINS

4-12 IN 2014



OCT. 11 HOME

SERIES
Washington leads 14-8-1

LAST MEETING
2013 - Falcons won 27-26

STADIUM
FedExField (79,000)

Having three quarterbacks throw for over 1,000 yards in a season is never a recipe for success. Jay Gruden had a hellacious time deciding which quarterback should start in his first season as head coach. Robert Griffin III made seven starts, Kirk Cousins made five and Colt McCoy made four. Albeit it wasn't by design, injuries caused all three quarterbacks to play significant time. Much to Gruden's chagrin, no one was able to separate themselves as the number one man as each struggled to produce.

DeSean Jackson caught just 56 balls in his first season with the Redskins, but the boom-or-bust game-changer still racked up 1,169 yards receiving and six scores. Running back Alfred Morris saw his rushing yards decrease for the second straight season. Defensively, Ryan Kerrigan was a bright spot with 13.5 sacks. Oft-injured Brian Orakpo was let go and the Redskins decided to upgrade their secondary by adding safety Dashon Goldson from Tampa Bay.

Atlanta has won its last four meetings dating back to 2006.





NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

7-9 IN 2014



OCT. 15 AWAY
JAN. 3 HOME

SERIES

Falcons lead 48-43

LAST MEETING

2014 - Falcons won 30-14

STADIUM

Mercedes-Benz
Superdome (76,468)

Bitter rival New Orleans was swept away by the Falcons in 2014 after a thrilling season opening 37-34 overtime defeat. Drew Brees' favorite target Jimmy Graham was traded to Seattle for center Max Unger. General Manager Mickey Loomis' mismanagement of the cap led to the loss of Graham, Ben Grubbs, Kenny Stills, Curtis Lofton and Pierre Thomas among others. The Saints now need to find a way to revamp the NFL's 31st ranked defense without further damaging the salary cap.

Cornerback Brandon Browner and linebacker Dannell Ellerbe were acquired to help fill holes. Running Back C.J. Spiller will attempt to share the load with Mark Ingram, who had a breakout year in 2014. Brees threw for 4,952 yards and 33 touchdowns last season but his top two targets have now departed. Brandin Cooks will take on an increased role in his second season as a go-to target along with 10-year veteran Marques Colston.

Over the past five seasons there have been three sweeps; two by the Saints in 2011 and 2013 then one by Atlanta in 2014.



TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

2-14 IN 2014



NOV. 1 HOME
DEC. 6 AWAY

SERIES

Falcons lead 22-21

LAST MEETING

2014 - Falcons won 27-17

STADIUM

Raymond James
(65,890)

The Bucs selected Jameis Winston with the No. 1 overall pick and envision him as the team's first franchise quarterback since Doug Williams. Tampa was a mess last season with big free agent signings Michael Johnson, Josh McCown and Anthony Collins all busting big time. Their poor play resulted in a team that couldn't move the ball on offense and couldn't stop anyone on defense.

Mike Evans was the lone bright spot on offense as the rookie from Texas A&M caught 12 touchdown passes. Both General Manager Jason Licht and head coach Lovie Smith enter their second season in the Bay and have already cut ties with the likes of Dashon Goldson, Adrian Clayborn, Da'Quan Bowers and Mason Foster along with the aforementioned trio of Johnson, McCown and Collins.

Dirk Koetter enters his first season as offensive coordinator after a long run in Atlanta. The Bucs were humiliated in the Dome last year on a Thursday night losing 56-14. Devin Hester broke Deion Sanders' all-time return touchdown record in the blowout.



SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

8-8 IN 2014



NOV. 8 AWAY

SERIES

San Francisco leads 45-29-1

LAST MEETING

2013 - San Francisco
won 34-24

STADIUM

Levi's (71,008)

Jim Harbaugh is out. Jim Tomsula is in. The defensive line coach for the Niners from 2007-2014 was named the 19th coach in franchise history this January. Tomsula faces a steep list of departures which includes Patrick Willis, Chris Borland, Michael Crabtree, Chris Culliver and Frank Gore. Additions of Torrey Smith and Jerome Simpson will attempt to shore up the void left by Crabtree, while Reggie Bush and Darnell Dockett should help ease the blows left by Gore and Willis.

Colin Kaepernick threw 19 touchdowns after cashing in on a new contract. Linebacker Aldon Smith teetered on the verge of being kicked out of the League due to his off field issues and will need to stay out of trouble during his contract year.

The 49ers boasted a top five defense but the offense was middle of the pack ranking 20th in total yards. Carlos Hyde is expected to get the majority of the carries in Gore's absence.

San Francisco has dominated the series and has won the past two meetings after Atlanta grabbed four straight.



INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

11-5 IN 2014



NOV. 22 HOME

SERIES

Indianapolis leads 13-2

LAST MEETING

2011 - Falcons won 31-7

STADIUM

Lucas Oil (67,000)

The Falcons will face Andrew Luck for the first time when they welcome the Colts to the Georgia Dome this November. Atlanta thumped a Curtis Painter-led Colts team back in 2011, 31-7. Indianapolis' fortunes have changed greatly over those four years. The Colts fell to eventual Super Bowl champion New England in the conference championship last season.

Luck orchestrated the third-best offense in the League and threw for 4,761 yards and 40 touchdowns. He will finally have a healthy workhorse back to hand it off to in Frank Gore who signed after 10 seasons in San Francisco. Gore should bolster a running attack that ranked 22nd in 2014. Receivers Reggie Wayne and Hakeem Nicks both have left along with running back Ahmad Bradshaw, but Andre Johnson is slated to line up alongside T.Y. Hilton and give Luck another great target. Johnson, the longtime Texan, has accumulated five 100+ catch seasons over his 12-year career.

Historically, Indianapolis has dominated the series winning 13 out of 15 meetings.



MINNESOTA VIKINGS

7-9 IN 2014



NOV. 29 HOME

SERIES

Minnesota leads 16-10

LAST MEETING

2014 - Minnesota won 41-28

STADIUM

TCF Bank (50,805)

Adrian Peterson returns to the gridiron with fresh legs, meaning opposing teams will have their hands full. Peterson played in just one game before getting suspended for his indictment on charges of reckless or negligent injury to a child. There were rumors of the Vikings cutting him or trading him to a team like the Cowboys, but when the dust settled Peterson was still in purple.

Teddy Bridgewater's numbers might not have been sexy (14 touchdowns, 12 interceptions) but his poise was beyond his years as Minnesota dealt with numerous losses on the offensive side of the ball. Bridgewater proved to be a great leader and got better as the season went on. New addition Mike Wallace is a deep threat that Bridgewater can look to down the sidelines. The defense allowed only 223 yards passing per game, good for seventh best in the league.

Bridgewater threw for 317 yards while Jerick McKinnon ran for 135 and Matt Asiata scored three touchdowns as the Vikings romped the Falcons in Minnesota, 41-28 last season. Matt Ryan managed three touchdown passes.



CAROLINA PANTHERS

7-8-1 IN 2014



DEC. 13 AWAY
DEC. 27 HOME

SERIES

Falcons lead 24-16

LAST MEETING

2014 - Carolina won 34-3

STADIUM

Bank of America (73,298)

Carolina spoiled Atlanta's chances of a playoff berth with a 34-3 victory over the Falcons in the Georgia Dome Week 17. The Falcons still lead the all-time series 24-16, but the season finale was a disappointing end to the year.

Cam Newton once again was up-and-down during the season but made plays when he needed to. In June, Newton cashed in on his play-making ability and signed a five-year, \$103.8 million dollar extension. The Panthers signed offensive tackle Michael Oher to a two-year deal to protect their investment in Newton.

Kelvin Benjamin excelled in his first season and caught nine touchdowns in addition to 1,008 yards receiving. Once again Luke Kuechly was the heart and soul of the defense with 166 tackles and a nose for the ball. Carolina finished under .500 and tied with Cincinnati 37-37, but still managed to reach the playoffs and win the division for the second consecutive season. They beat the Cardinals in the Wild Card game, but succumbed to Seattle 31-17 in the Divisional Round.



JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

3-13 IN 2014



DEC. 20 AWAY

SERIES

Jacksonville leads 3-2

LAST MEETING

2011 - Falcons won 41-14

STADIUM

EverBank Field (67,164)

The Jags and Falcons meet in the regular season instead of preseason for the first time since 2011. In that game, Atlanta recorded five sacks and Matt Ryan tossed three touchdowns as the Falcons won 41-14 in the Georgia Dome.

Jacksonville selected Blake Bortles third overall last year out of UCF and watched him take his lumps. Bortles threw 17 interceptions to just 11 touchdowns as the Jags sputtered to another losing season; their fourth straight. Jacksonville hasn't been over .500 since 2007 when it lost in the Divisional Round.

The 31st ranked offense lost go-to guy Cecil Shorts III on the outside, but made an enormous splash by signing former Broncos tight end Julius Thomas to a five-year, \$46 million deal which makes him the NFL's highest-paid tight end. Thomas caught 24 touchdowns over his past two seasons in Denver, but Bortles is a far cry from Peyton Manning. The Jags caught a tough break as 2015 No. 3 pick Dante Fowler Jr. tore his ACL on his first day of rookie minicamp.

NFC REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE



ARIZONA CARDINALS

9/13	Saints	4:05 PM ET
9/20	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
9/27	49ers	4:05 PM ET
10/4	Rams	4:25 PM ET
10/11	at Lions	4:05 PM ET
10/18	at Steelers	1:00 PM ET
10/26	Ravens	8:30 PM ET
11/1	at Browns	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Seahawks	8:30 PM ET
11/22	Bengals	4:05 PM ET
11/29	at 49ers	4:05 PM ET
12/6	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
12/10	Vikings	8:25 PM ET
12/20	at Eagles	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Packers	4:25 PM ET
1/3	Seahawks	4:25 PM ET

DALLAS COWBOYS

9/13	Giants	8:30 PM ET
9/20	at Eagles	4:25 PM ET
9/27	Falcons	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Saints	8:30 PM ET
10/11	Patriots	4:25 PM ET
10/25	at Giants	4:25 PM ET
11/1	Seahawks	4:25 PM ET
11/8	Eagles	8:30 PM ET
11/15	at Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
11/22	at Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
11/26	Panthers	4:30 PM ET
12/7	at Redskins	8:30 PM ET
12/13	at Packers	4:25 PM ET
12/19	Jets	8:25 PM ET
12/27	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Redskins	1:00 PM ET

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

9/13	at Cardinals	4:05 PM ET
9/20	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Panthers	1:00 PM ET
10/4	Cowboys	8:30 PM ET
10/11	at Eagles	1:00 PM ET
10/15	Falcons	8:25 PM ET
10/25	at Colts	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Giants	1:00 PM ET
11/8	Titans	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Texans	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Panthers	1:00 PM ET
12/13	at Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
12/21	Lions	8:30 PM ET
12/27	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

9/14	Vikings	10:20 PM ET
9/20	at Steelers	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Cardinals	4:05 PM ET
10/4	Packers	4:25 PM ET
10/11	at Giants	8:30 PM ET
10/18	Ravens	4:25 PM ET
10/22	Seahawks	8:25 PM ET
11/1	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
11/8	Falcons	4:05 PM ET
11/22	at Seahawks	4:25 PM ET
11/29	Cardinals	4:05 PM ET
12/6	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
12/13	at Browns	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Bengals	8:30 PM ET
12/27	at Lions	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Rams	4:25 PM ET

ATLANTA FALCONS

9/14	Eagles	7:10 PM ET
9/20	at Giants	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Cowboys	1:00 PM ET
10/4	Texans	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Redskins	1:00 PM ET
10/15	at Saints	8:25 PM ET
11/25	at Titans	8:25 PM ET
11/1	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
11/8	49ers	4:05 PM ET
11/22	Colts	1:00 PM ET
11/29	Vikings	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
12/13	at Panthers	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Panthers	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Saints	1:00 PM ET

DETROIT LIONS

9/13	at Chargers	4:05 PM ET
9/20	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Broncos	8:30 PM ET
10/5	at Seahawks	8:30 PM ET
10/11	Cardinals	4:05 PM ET
10/18	Bears	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Vikings	1:00 PM ET
11/1	at Chiefs	9:30 AM ET
11/15	at Packers	1:00 PM ET
11/22	Raiders	1:00 PM ET
11/26	Eagles	12:30 PM ET
12/3	Packers	8:25 PM ET
12/13	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
12/21	at Saints	8:30 PM ET
12/27	49ers	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Bears	1:00 PM ET

NEW YORK GIANTS

9/13	at Cowboys	8:30 PM ET
9/20	Falcons	1:00 PM ET
9/24	Redskins	8:25 PM ET
10/4	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
10/11	49ers	8:30 PM ET
10/19	at Eagles	8:30 PM ET
10/25	Cowboys	4:25 PM ET
11/1	at Saints	1:00 PM ET
11/8	at Buccaneers	4:05 PM ET
11/15	Patriots	4:25 PM ET
11/29	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Jets	1:00 PM ET
12/14	at Dolphins	8:30 PM ET
12/20	Panthers	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Eagles	1:00 PM ET

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

9/13	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
9/20	at Packers	8:30 PM ET
9/27	Bears	4:25 PM ET
10/5	Lions	8:30 PM ET
10/11	at Bengals	1:00 PM ET
10/18	Panthers	4:05 PM ET
10/22	at 49ers	8:25 PM ET
11/1	at Cowboys	4:25 PM ET
11/15	Cardinals	8:30 PM ET
11/22	49ers	4:25 PM ET
11/29	Steelers	4:25 PM ET
12/6	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
12/13	at Ravens	8:30 PM ET
12/20	Browns	4:05 PM ET
12/27	Rams	4:25 PM ET
1/3	at Cardinals	4:25 PM ET

CAROLINA PANTHERS

9/13	at Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Texans	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Saints	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
10/18	at Seahawks	4:05 PM ET
10/25	Eagles	8:30 PM ET
11/2	Colts	8:30 PM ET
11/8	Packers	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
11/22	Redskins	1:00 PM ET
11/26	at Cowboys	4:30 PM ET
12/6	at Saints	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Falcons	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Giants	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET

GREEN BAY PACKERS

9/13	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Seahawks	8:30 PM ET
9/28	Chiefs	8:30 PM ET
10/4	at 49ers	4:25 PM ET
10/11	Rams	1:00 PM ET
10/18	Chargers	4:25 PM ET
11/1	at Broncos	8:30 PM ET
11/8	at Panthers	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Lions	1:00 PM ET
11/22	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
11/26	Bears	8:30 PM ET
12/3	at Lions	8:25 PM ET
12/13	Cowboys	4:25 PM ET
12/20	at Raiders	4:05 PM ET
12/27	at Cardinals	4:25 PM ET
1/3	Vikings	1:00 PM ET

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

9/14	at Falcons	7:10 PM ET
9/20	Cowboys	4:25 PM ET
9/27	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Saints	1:00 PM ET
10/19	Giants	8:30 PM ET
10/25	at Panthers	8:30 PM ET
11/8	at Cowboys	8:30 PM ET
11/15	Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
11/22	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
11/26	at Lions	12:30 PM ET
12/6	at Patriots	4:25 PM ET
12/13	Bills	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Cardinals	1:00 PM ET
12/26	Redskins	8:25 PM ET
1/3	at Giants	1:00 PM ET

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

9/13	Titans	4:25 PM ET
9/20	at Saints	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Texans	1:00 PM ET
10/4	Panthers	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
11/1	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET
11/8	Giants	4:05 PM ET
11/15	Cowboys	1:00 PM ET
11/22	at Eagles	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Colts	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Falcons	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Saints	1:00 PM ET
12/17	at Rams	8:25 PM ET
12/27	Bears	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Panthers	1:00 PM ET

CHICAGO BEARS

9/13	Packers	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Cardinals	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Seahawks	4:25 PM ET
10/4	Raiders	1:00 PM ET
10/11	at Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
10/18	at Lions	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Vikings	1:00 PM ET
11/9	at Chargers	8:30 PM ET
11/15	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
11/22	Broncos	1:00 PM ET
11/26	at Packers	8:30 PM ET
12/6	49ers	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Redskins	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Lions	1:00 PM ET

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

9/14	at 49ers	10:20 PM ET
9/20	Lions	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Chargers	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Broncos	4:25 PM ET
10/18	Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Lions	1:00 PM ET
11/1	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
11/8	Rams	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Raiders	4:05 PM ET
11/22	Packers	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Seahawks	1:00 PM ET
12/10	at Cardinals	8:25 PM ET
12/20	Bears	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Giants	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Packers	1:00 PM ET

ST. LOUIS RAMS

9/13	Seahawks	1:00 PM ET
9/20	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Steelers	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Cardinals	4:25 PM ET
10/11	at Packers	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Browns	1:00 PM ET
11/1	49ers	1:00 PM ET
11/8	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Bears	1:00 PM ET
11/22	at Ravens	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Bengals	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Cardinals	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Lions	1:00 PM ET
12/17	Buccaneers	8:25 PM ET
12/27	at Seahawks	4:25 PM ET
1/3	at 49ers	4:25 PM ET

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

9/13	Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Rams	1:00 PM ET
9/24	at Giants	8:25 PM ET
10/4	Eagles	1:00 PM ET
10/11	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET
10/18	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
11/8	at Patriots	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Saints	1:00 PM ET
11/22	at Panthers	1:00 PM ET
11/29	Giants	1:00 PM ET
12/7	Cowboys	8:30 PM ET
12/13	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Bills	1:00 PM ET
12/26	at Eagles	8:25 PM ET
1/3	at Cowboys	1:00 PM ET



AFC REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE

BALTIMORE RAVENS

9/13	at Broncos	4:25 PM ET
9/20	at Raiders	4:05 PM ET
9/27	Bengals	1:00 PM ET
10/1	at Steelers	8:25 PM ET
10/11	Browns	1:00 PM ET
10/18	at 49ers	4:25 PM ET
10/26	at Cardinals	8:30 PM ET
11/1	Chargers	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
11/22	Rams	1:00 PM ET
11/30	at Browns	8:30 PM ET
12/6	at Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Seahawks	8:30 PM ET
12/20	Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Steelers	8:30 PM ET
1/3	at Bengals	1:00 PM ET

DENVER BRONCOS

9/13	Ravens	4:25 PM ET
9/17	at Chiefs	8:26 PM ET
9/27	at Lions	8:30 PM ET
10/4	Vikings	4:25 PM ET
10/11	at Raiders	4:25 PM ET
10/18	at Browns	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Packers	8:30 PM ET
11/8	at Colts	4:25 PM ET
11/15	Chiefs	4:25 PM ET
11/22	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
11/29	Patriots	8:30 PM ET
12/6	at Chargers	4:05 PM ET
12/13	Raiders	4:05 PM ET
12/20	at Steelers	4:25 PM ET
12/28	Bengals	8:30 PM ET
1/3	Chargers	4:25 PM ET

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

9/13	at Texans	1:00 PM ET
9/17	Broncos	8:25 PM ET
9/28	at Packers	8:30 PM ET
10/4	at Bengals	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Bears	1:00 PM ET
10/18	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Steelers	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Lions	9:30 AM ET
11/15	at Broncos	4:25 PM ET
11/22	at Chargers	8:30 PM ET
11/29	Bills	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Raiders	4:05 PM ET
12/13	Chargers	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Ravens	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Browns	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Raiders	1:00 PM ET

OAKLAND RAIDERS

9/13	Bengals	4:25 PM ET
9/20	Ravens	4:05 PM ET
9/27	at Browns	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Bears	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Broncos	4:25 PM ET
10/25	at Chargers	4:05 PM ET
11/1	Jets	4:05 PM ET
11/8	at Steelers	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Vikings	4:05 PM ET
11/22	at Lions	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Chiefs	4:05 PM ET
12/13	at Broncos	4:05 PM ET
12/20	Packers	4:05 PM ET
12/24	Chargers	8:25 PM ET
1/3	at Chiefs	1:00 PM ET

BUFFALO BILLS

9/13	Colts	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Patriots	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Dolphins	4:25 PM ET
10/4	Giants	1:00 PM ET
10/11	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
10/18	Bengals	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Jaguars	9:30 AM ET
11/8	Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
11/12	at Jets	8:25 PM ET
11/23	at Patriots	8:30 PM ET
11/29	at Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Texans	1:00 PM ET
12/13	at Eagles	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Cowboys	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Jets	1:00 PM ET

HOUSTON TEXANS

9/13	Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
9/20	at Panthers	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET
10/8	Colts	8:25 PM ET
10/18	at Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Titans	1:00 PM ET
11/16	at Bengals	8:30 PM ET
11/22	Jets	1:00 PM ET
11/29	Saints	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Patriots	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Colts	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET

MIAMI DOLPHINS

9/13	at Redskins	1:00 PM ET
9/20	at Jaguars	4:05 PM ET
9/27	Bills	4:25 PM ET
10/4	Jets	9:30 AM ET
10/18	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Texans	1:00 PM ET
10/29	at Patriots	8:25 PM ET
11/8	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Eagles	1:00 PM ET
11/22	Cowboys	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Ravens	1:00 PM ET
12/14	Giants	8:30 PM ET
12/20	at Chargers	4:25 PM ET
12/27	Colts	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Patriots	1:00 PM ET

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

9/10	at Patriots	8:30 PM ET
9/20	49ers	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
10/1	Ravens	8:25 PM ET
10/12	at Chargers	8:30 PM ET
10/18	Cardinals	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Bengals	1:00 PM ET
11/8	Raiders	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Browns	1:00 PM ET
11/29	at Seahawks	4:25 PM ET
12/6	Colts	8:30 PM ET
12/13	at Bengals	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Broncos	4:25 PM ET
12/27	at Ravens	8:30 PM ET
1/3	at Browns	1:00 PM ET

CINCINNATI BENGALS

9/13	at Raiders	4:25 PM ET
9/20	Chargers	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Ravens	1:00 PM ET
10/4	Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Seahawks	1:00 PM ET
10/18	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
11/1	at Steelers	1:00 PM ET
11/5	Browns	8:25 PM ET
11/16	Texans	8:30 PM ET
11/22	at Cardinals	4:05 PM ET
11/29	Rams	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Browns	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Steelers	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at 49ers	8:30 PM ET
12/28	at Broncos	8:30 PM ET
1/3	Ravens	1:00 PM ET

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

9/13	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
9/21	Jets	8:30 PM ET
9/27	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
10/4	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
10/8	at Texans	8:25 PM ET
10/18	Patriots	8:30 PM ET
10/25	Saints	1:00 PM ET
11/2	at Panthers	8:30 PM ET
11/8	Broncos	4:25 PM ET
11/22	at Falcons	1:00 PM ET
11/29	Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Steelers	8:30 PM ET
12/13	at Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Texans	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Titans	1:00 PM ET

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

9/10	Steelers	8:30 PM ET
9/20	at Bills	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
10/11	at Cowboys	4:25 PM ET
10/18	at Colts	8:30 PM ET
10/25	Jets	1:00 PM ET
10/29	Dolphins	8:25 PM ET
11/8	Redskins	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Giants	4:25 PM ET
11/23	Bills	8:30 PM ET
11/29	at Broncos	8:30 PM ET
12/6	Eagles	4:25 PM ET
12/13	at Texans	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Titans	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Dolphins	1:00 PM ET

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

9/13	Lions	4:05 PM ET
9/20	at Bengals	1:00 PM ET
9/27	at Vikings	1:00 PM ET
10/4	Browns	4:05 PM ET
10/12	Steelers	8:30 PM ET
10/18	at Packers	4:25 PM ET
10/25	Raiders	4:05 PM ET
11/1	at Ravens	1:00 PM ET
11/9	Bears	8:30 PM ET
11/22	Chiefs	8:30 PM ET
11/29	at Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Broncos	4:05 PM ET
12/13	at Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Dolphins	4:26 PM ET
12/24	at Raiders	8:25 PM ET
1/3	at Broncos	4:25 PM ET

CLEVELAND BROWNS

9/13	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Titans	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Raiders	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Chargers	4:05 PM ET
10/11	at Ravens	1:00 PM ET
10/18	Broncos	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Rams	1:00 PM ET
11/1	Cardinals	1:00 PM ET
11/5	at Bengals	8:25 PM ET
11/15	at Steelers	1:00 PM ET
11/30	Ravens	8:30 PM ET
12/6	Bengals	1:00 PM ET
12/13	49ers	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Seahawks	4:05 PM ET
12/27	at Chiefs	1:00 PM ET
1/3	Steelers	1:00 PM ET

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

9/13	Panthers	1:00 PM ET
9/20	Dolphins	4:05 PM ET
9/27	at Patriots	1:00 PM ET
10/4	at Colts	1:00 PM ET
10/11	at Buccaneers	1:00 PM ET
10/18	Texans	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Bills	9:30 AM ET
11/8	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
11/15	at Ravens	1:00 PM ET
11/19	Titans	8:25 PM ET
11/29	Chargers	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Titans	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Colts	1:00 PM ET
12/20	Falcons	1:00 PM ET
12/27	at Saints	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Texans	1:00 PM ET

NEW YORK JETS

9/13	Browns	1:00 PM ET
9/21	at Colts	8:30 PM ET
9/27	Eagles	8:30 PM ET
10/4	at Dolphins	9:30 AM ET
10/18	Redskins	1:00 PM ET
10/25	at Patriots	1:00 PM ET
11/1	at Raiders	4:05 PM ET
11/8	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
11/12	Bills	8:25 PM ET
11/22	at Texans	1:00 PM ET
11/29	Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
12/6	at Giants	1:00 PM ET
12/13	Titans	1:00 PM ET
12/19	at Cowboy	8:25 PM ET
12/27	Patriots	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Bills	1:00 PM ET

TENNESSEE TITANS

9/13	at Buccaneers	4:25 PM ET
9/20	at Browns	1:00 PM ET
9/27	Colts	1:00 PM ET
10/11	Bills	1:00 PM ET
10/18	Dolphins	1:00 PM ET
10/25	Falcons	1:00 PM ET
11/1	at Texans	1:00 PM ET
11/8	at Saints	1:00 PM ET
11/15	Panthers	1:00 PM ET
11/19	at Jaguars	8:25 PM ET
11/29	Raiders	1:00 PM ET
12/6	Jaguars	1:00 PM ET
12/13	at Jets	1:00 PM ET
12/20	at Patriots	1:00 PM ET
12/27	Texans	1:00 PM ET
1/3	at Colts	1:00 PM ET

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THROWBACK *to the* 1966 FALCONS

Tommy Nobis, the perfect piece to build franchise

By Evan Miller

Team owner and founder Rankin M. Smith was awarded the 15th NFL franchise for \$8 million as the Atlanta Falcons were birthed in 1966. The name Falcons was suggested by Julia Elliott, a high school teacher from Griffin, Ga., who won a contest in 1965. Her reasoning behind the name was stated in an essay. "The falcon is proud and dignified, with great courage and fight. It never drops its prey. It's deadly and has a great sporting tradition." With the name now intact, Norb Hecker was pegged as the first coach in team history. The inaugural season began at the NFL Draft when the Falcons held the first pick in every round along with an extra compensatory pick at the end of each of the first five rounds. With the first pick in franchise history, the team selected two-time All-American, Outland and Maxwell award winning linebacker Tommy Nobis from the University of Texas.

George Kunz, drafted in 1969 by the Falcons, was a teammate of Nobis for six seasons and described him as the perfect building piece of a professional football franchise.

"Tommy is the epitome of the type of person a franchise could build on," said Kunz. "I do not know if you can actually give anybody a bigger compliment than that."

It did not take long for the Falcons to get their first Pro Bowler as Nobis was elected his rookie season after being named Rookie of the Year and setting the unofficial record for most tackles in a season with a staggering and untouchable 294, which still stands today. Even more impressive, Nobis accomplished that feat in just a 14-game season, meaning he averaged close to 18 tackles a game. In his 11-season career, Nobis made the Pro Bowl five teams and was selected to the NFL's 1960's All-decade team.

THE FALCONS FOUNDATION

The Falcons franchise was built on Nobis, which led to his nickname "Mr. Falcon." While the up-and-coming team battled through the inevitable growing pains of a brand new franchise, Nobis was always counted on to show up and lead at an All-Pro level.

The linebacker position that Nobis played made him not only the captain of the defense but the heart and soul of the team.

"If you are going to start a franchise, you are going to start with a defense," explained Kunz. "And if you are going to start with a defense, you are going to start with a signal caller and Tommy was all of that."

Teammates looked up to Mr. Falcon from the moment he was drafted through his retirement in

1976. Kunz describes Nobis as someone that "lived and died for the team."

Falcons coach Norm Van Brocklin once pointed to Nobis' locker and proclaimed, "There's where our football team dresses." This tale continues to get passed down through the franchise's history as Nobis set the standard for each guy to ever put on the uniform behind him.

"Tommy was the ultimate team guy. He was always there when you needed him," said Kunz. "He would always give it his best effort. If it was successful or not, that was not the point. Tommy was set out to make sure he was doing the best he could all the time."

INAUGURAL SEASON

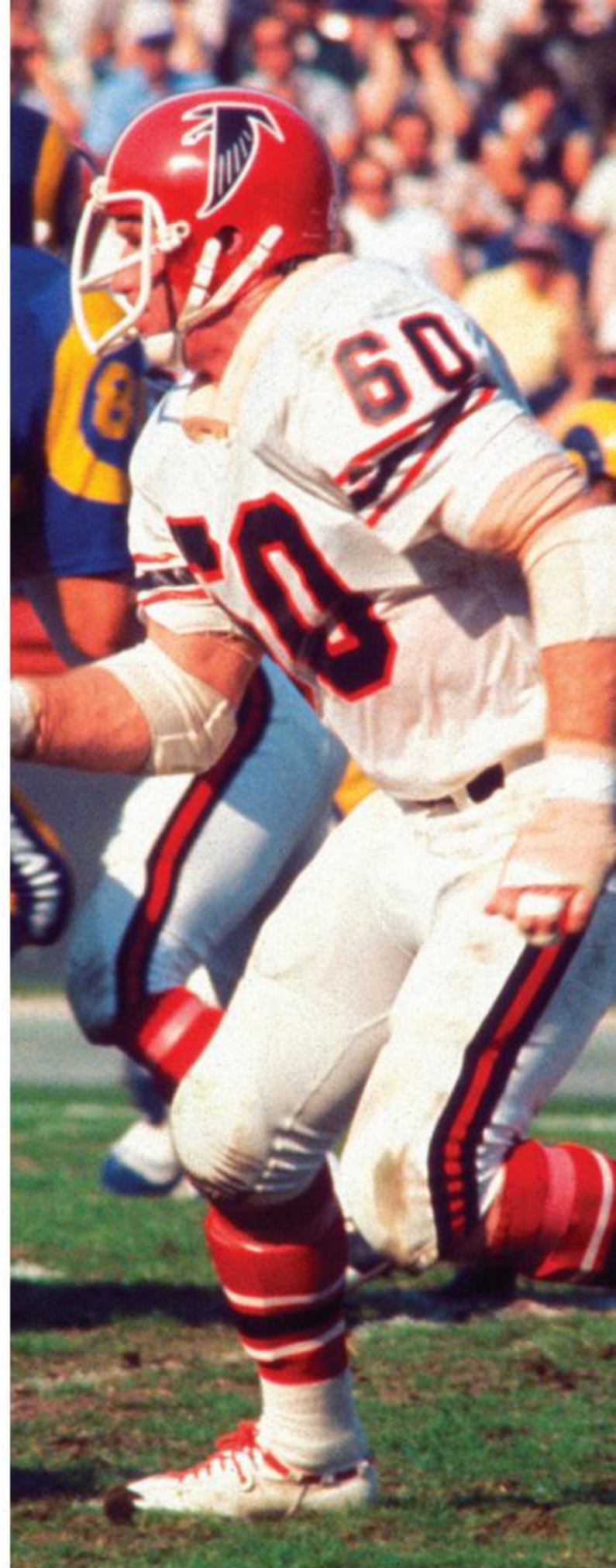
The Falcons finished 3-11 that first year, but as the season went on, it was clear that the team was taking steps forward. After losing the first nine games of the season, Atlanta captured its first win in franchise history against the Giants, 27-16. In that game, starting quarterback Randy Johnson threw for 177 yards and three scores. The three touchdown passes marked the first multiple touchdown passing game in Atlanta history. The Falcons took their lumps in their opening season as they only scored 204 points and allowed 437, but the season was the start of an illustrious career for Nobis and the many all-time greats that would help shape the franchise.

Van Brocklin stepped in as Atlanta's new head coach three games into the 1968 season. During his seven years in Atlanta, Van Brocklin continued to guide the progress started in the team's first two seasons and it revolved around the leadership of Nobis. His effort and 'play to the final whistle' mentality was matched with passion for the game. To have the most talented player on the team compete each day to not be outworked is the formula for building sustainability and steady improvement.

FALCONS FATE

Before he became synonymous with the Atlanta Falcons, Nobis was drafted by the Houston Oilers of the American Football League but decided to ink his contract in Atlanta instead. Around the League, he would bring respect to the franchise and Super Bowl winner and Hall of Fame running back Larry Csonka once said that he would rather face Dick Butkus than Nobis.

After his playing career was over, Nobis was inducted into the Falcons Ring of Honor in the 2004 inaugural class. Both the University of Texas and



the Falcons retired his number 60, making him the first and last Falcon to ever wear the now legendary number.

Although Nobis is known for his excellent play on the field and helping the Falcons become who they are today, his efforts off the field were also unparalleled. Nobis won the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. award for his activism and work with the Georgia Special Olympics and he also was named the NFL Man of the Year.

Nobis was the heart and soul of the Falcons during his playing time and will forever be a centerpiece within the Falcons brand. Overall, he spent over forty years as a member of the organization, in the front office and on the field. He helped instill an identity that is still present in the organization today and proved that there really isn't a better guy you would want to build a franchise around.



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JEFF VAN NOTE'S *LONGEVITY* UNMATCHED IN FALCON LORE

By Avi Goodfriend

NFL players that leave the game with enough success to call themselves veterans are often associated with the decade they spent with the team. One Falcon, however, displayed a level of longevity that defies what professional sports' long-rooted adversary 'father time' trained us to believe. Jeff Van Note is that man.

The former Falcon was born on February 7, 1946 in South Orange, NJ. He played 18 seasons in the NFL, all as a Falcon. He's played in more seasons than anyone else in team history and his 155 consecutive games are also a franchise record. He was an All-Pro in 1982 and was selected to six Pro Bowls during his career; tied with Claude Humphrey for the Falcons record. Van Note's success and longevity as a Falcon earned him a spot in Atlanta's Ring of Honor, a well-deserved accolade given his illustrious playing career.

A HISTORIC MOVE

Center wasn't always the go-to position for Van Note. In fact, he didn't even become a legitimate center until he was in the pros. In high school, Van Note played defensive back and running back. He attended the University of Kentucky and played running back, linebacker and defensive end. The Falcons drafted him in the 11th round of the 1969 draft as a linebacker to play for head coach Norm Van Brocklin. It was during his first training camp when Van Note was told that defense wasn't going to be his specialty in the NFL. "Marion Campbell, the defensive coordinator told me one day to pick up the red playbook instead of a black one and that I was moving to offense," said Van Note. He would have to start fresh at the bottom of the depth chart at center, a position that was already seven deep at the time.

Before he could even think about sniffing the field, Van Note was placed on waivers and re-claimed twice by the Falcons, with some time spent in the Huntsville minor league system in between.

In the beginning of the second season, an assistant coach by the name of Duane Putnam took a liking to Van Note and began spending extra time working with him. Throughout training camp he quietly moved up the depth chart and started seeing the field on special teams, which eventually bumped him up to second string. After a very impressive preseason at center, he saw the field in Week 1 as the starter in the 1970 season-opener against the New Orleans Saints. From that point on, the center job was owned by Van Note for the next 17 seasons.

A PILLAR OF CONSISTENCY

It is a commonly accepted notion that playing for one team for a whole career is beneficial and that it provides stability, team chemistry and a connection with the fans among other aspects. However, in Van Note's case, he may have remained on one team, but things were always changing around him. He snapped for 14 different quarterbacks and played for five head coaches.

Of the many quarterbacks that Van Note snapped to, perhaps none were as glorified as Falcons legend Steve Bartkowski.

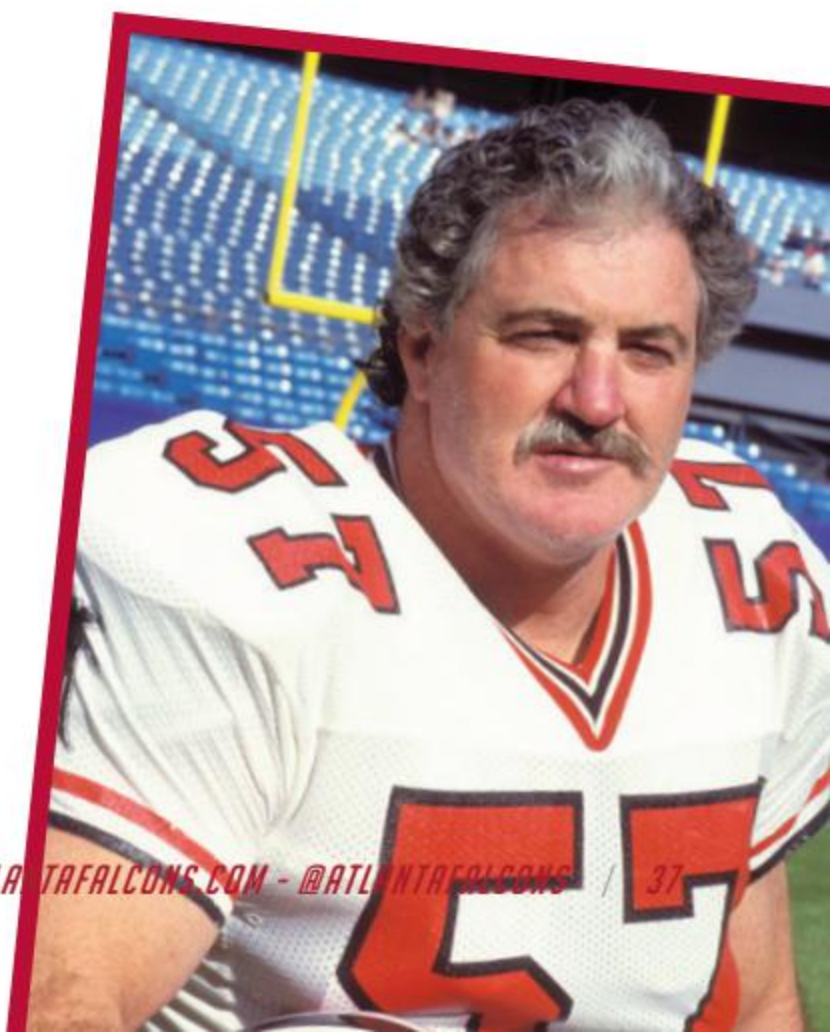
"He [Bartkowski] was the most talented quarterback I played with and threw the long ball with such touch," said Van Note. "While he was playing, he was in the same category as [Terry] Bradshaw and [Dan] Fouts. His greatness, I feel, was riddled by injuries."

In their 11 seasons as teammates, Bartkowski threw for 23,470 yards and 154 touchdowns.

Van Note was also fortunate to be on the club in 1977, when Atlanta put forth the best defensive unit of all-time, known as the Gritz Blitz. Throughout the entire season, that defense only allowed 129 points, a record that still stands today. Jerry Glanville was the defensive coordinator at the time and Van Note describes what it was like going against them in practice and not letting opposing offenses hurt them during that season.

"They were a talented bunch, Glanville was a young coordinator who made calculated changes. He had the right group of people. Our practices were a lot different than they are now. There was a lot more intensity and a lot less 'pads-off' days. They were impressive and made you work."

On December 14, 1986, Atlanta Fulton-County Stadium played host to Jeff Van Note Day. The ceremony took place to honor the veteran after his 246 career games played, as his whole family was there for the occasion. The long-time center was even given a vintage 1957 Chevy, to represent his No. 57 jersey, which hangs high in the Ring of Honor. Over his career, Van Note played with six of the other eight current Ring of Honor inductees. When paying tribute to the franchise players that shaped the Falcons over the last 50 years, it's only fitting that we recognize the longest-tenured Falcon in history; No. 57, Jeff Van Note.



NFL PREVIEW

BY CRAIG SAGER II
& KYLE SANDY



The Super Bowl defending champion New England Patriots bring back a coaching nucleus with 41 years of experience in the organization between head coach Bill Belichick (17), offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels (12) and defensive coordinator Matt Patricia (12). The Pats will be the clear-cut favorite to win the AFC East for a seventh straight season, but Tom Brady faces an early season suspension after his role in Deflategate. The Buffalo Bills overhauled their team with Rex Ryan stepping in as the new leader. LeSean McCoy will be Rex's workhorse back while Percy Harvin joins Sammy Watkins as deep threats. The Dolphins will need to get over the .500 hump for the first time since 2008 to keep fourth-year head coach Joe Philbin safe. New General Manager Mike Maccagnan brought in a plethora of talent for new Jets head coach Todd Bowles to work with in New York. Darrelle Revis, Buster Skrine and Antonio Cromartie anchor the backend of what projects to be one of the best defenses in the League.

AFC NORTH ALL DEFENSE

The hotly contested AFC North will be won with defense and the division still has plenty of it. Reigning division champ Pittsburgh will enter life without legendary defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau and veteran leaders Ike Taylor, Troy Polamalu and Brett Keisel. Ben Roethlisberger and Le'Veon Bell make the offense go with the explosive Antonio Brown streaking down the sidelines. The Ravens expect Joe Flacco to continue his rise to elite status under the guidance of new offensive coordinator Marc Trestman. Wide receiver Breshad Perriman will need to play up to his first-round draft status as Steve Smith continues the final stretch of his successful career. Cincinnati has lost four-straight years in the Wild Card Round and is now 0-6 under Marvin Lewis in the playoffs. Andy Dalton must improve upon his 19:17 touchdown to interception ratio. Cleveland will need to find its footing on

offense and anoint a starting quarterback. The Browns drafted Danny Shelton to help with their League-worst run defense.

COLTS HAVE ALL THE LUCK

Indianapolis is banking on another AFC South title behind the arm of Andrew Luck who has brand new toys in Frank Gore and Andre Johnson. Houston has talent on offense, but the quarterback position remains a revolving door as three players saw time under center in 2014. Vince Wilfork will team up with J.J. Watt along the Texans defensive line. The Jaguars lost top pick Dante Fowler Jr. to injury on Day 1 of rookie minicamp. Blake Bortles will have a new favorite target in Julius Thomas, from Denver. The Titans selected Marcus Mariota second overall and hope he can spark the franchise like Steve McNair did in the early 2000's.

Peyton Manning returns to the prohibitive favorites to win the AFC West, the Denver Broncos. Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders should have more big seasons with Manning airing it out. Kansas City hopes Jeremy Maclin will finally give Alex Smith a deep threat at wide receiver. San Diego flirted with moving Philip Rivers but decided to keep the veteran quarterback that continues improving late into his career. The addition of Melvin Gordon should give the Chargers a rushing game they lacked last season as they averaged just 85.4 yards per game on the ground. Derek Carr looked good with limited talent around him in Oakland as a rookie and now will have Michael Crabtree and Amari Cooper flanking him as top options.

THE NFC

Parity exists throughout the NFL, but over the last decade, the NFC East has been a hub of the League's unpredictability and worst to first storylines. The division champion Dallas Cowboys were one controversial call away from a Divisional Playoff win, but are instead entering 2015 more

short-handed and one year older. DeMarco Murray led the League in rushing but will now call rival Philadelphia home in Chip Kelly's backfield. Darren McFadden will try and stay on the field as a newcomer to Dallas and the offense will likely have to carry a still suspect defense.

WILL EAGLES FLY HIGH

The Eagles missed the playoffs last season and will look to ride Murray back into the postseason with a new signal caller. Nick Foles was shipped to St. Louis and Sam Bradford was brought in. The Eagles expect big things from their top pick this year, wide receiver Nelson Agholor.

Jay Gruden's first year in Washington was plagued by more quarterback drama. DeSean Jackson, Pierre Garcon, Jordan Reed and running back Alfred Morris are viable offensive weapons but the unknown at quarterback if RGIII does not return to form could once again leave the Redskins in the cellar of the division.

The Giants have two Super Bowls with the duo of Tom Coughlin and Eli Manning but the franchise is currently clouded by its one playoff berth since the 2008 season. Odell Beckham Jr. emerged as one of the League's most exciting players and the receiver will be a key to keeping the offense moving.

In the NFC North, Chicago moved on from offensive guru Marc Trestman and welcomed in the defensive-minded John Fox from Denver. Calvin Johnson suffered lingering injuries last season and Golden Tate produced at a high level which will give Detroit quarterback Matthew Stafford a solid corps to stretch the field this season. The Lions finished 5-1 in the division last year, but the defense will have to fill the void left by Ndamukong Suh, who is now with the Dolphins.

Green Bay and arguably the League's top quarterback, Aaron Rodgers, are back and almost the entire lineup from last year's division winning team remains intact. The team added safety Damarious



Randall in the first-round of this year's draft.

Minnesota showed fight last year with Teddy Bridgewater at quarterback while Matt Asiata and Jerick McKinnon got valuable reps with the absence of the suspended Adrian Peterson. Linebacker Anthony Barr and cornerback Xavier Rhodes have proven to be gamechangers on the defensive side of the football and the Vikings also bring in the first cornerback taken in this year's draft with Trae Waynes.

A THIRD SUPER BOWL

The NFC West has sent Seattle to back-to-back Super Bowls and the Seahawks will face another competitive regular season with Arizona and St. Louis returning strong once again. The Cardinals were 9-1 to start last season before injuries forced the historic start to take a sharp turn. Carson Palmer and Drew Stanton are both back at quarterback after injuries and running back Andre Ellington has healed up from his sports hernia and foot setbacks. Safety Tyrann Mathieu and linebacker Kevin Minter have returned healthy. The team also added former Falcons Sean Weatherspoon and Corey Peters in the offseason. Weatherspoon is a pro bowl caliber starter when healthy.

St. Louis brought in Nick Foles to quarterback Jeff Fisher's offense and Gregg Williams is back for a second season to coordinate a very capable defense. Second-year pro Tre Mason will take the handoffs until this year's first-round pick, Todd Gurley, is healthy and able to join Mason and create a young and talented tandem. Defensive tackle Nick Fairley was signed to a one-year deal and can revive what was a disappointing career in Detroit. All 11 starters are returning defensively.

The 49ers are convinced this is a reload and not a rebuild season, but change was certainly in the air this offseason. Jim Harbaugh left for the Big Ten to lead Michigan and the core of the team was decimated.

Patrick Willis retired as did his replacement, Chris Borland. Right tackle and 25-year-old Anthony Davis, in another shocking announcement, walked away from the game this offseason. Frank Gore signed with the Colts and after the moves 20 combined Pro Bowls and more than 1,000 career starts were lost from the team this offseason.

Seattle hopes its heartbreaking Super Bowl loss will keep the team motivated. The decision to not handoff to running back Marshawn Lynch likely cost them the Super Bowl and after threatening to retire following the season, Lynch got the enhanced contract he wanted and returns with \$12 million coming his way this season. The biggest addition to the team is undoubtedly tight end Jimmy Graham. Graham can create a mismatch anywhere on the field and with quarterback Russell Wilson's accuracy and ability to extend plays, this duo is expected to make a huge impact.

NFC SOUTH UP FOR GRABS

Carolina became the first team to win back-to-back NFC South titles last year but with a 7-8-1 record, there is still much room for improvement. Greg Hardy played only one game last season and Carolina can move on from those off the field distractions. The team's biggest addition came at left tackle with Michael Oher. Protecting Cam Newton has been an increasing concern and the success of this season could rely on Oher's protection. Kelvin Benjamin was inconsistent catching the football at times during his rookie year, but proved to be one of the League's most explosive targets after hauling in 73 passes for 1,008 yards and nine touchdowns.

New Orleans took a huge step back defensively last season and finished with the 31st ranked unit after finishing fourth in total defense the previous year. Cornerback Brandon Browner was brought in to match up with the division's long-list of talented

receivers and stands 6-foot-4, 221 pounds. Graham caught a team-high 10 touchdowns last season but with his new home in Seattle, the Saints will look for more balance with the run game to lift back up what is typically one of the League's most prolific offenses. Mark Ingram rushed for nine touchdowns and 964 yards last season and will share the backfield with the explosive C.J. Spiller, who was signed from Buffalo this offseason.

WINSTON MAKES DEBUT

Tampa Bay receiver Vincent Jackson had another productive season with 70 catches for 1,002 yards, but it was the emergence of rookie wideout Mike Evans that makes this one of the League's top receiver duos. Evans caught 68 passes for 1,051 yards and led with a team-high 12 receiving touchdowns. This year's No. 1 overall pick, quarterback Jameis Winston, will have these towering targets to throw to. One of the reasons these receivers had so much success last season is that Tampa Bay's run game with Doug Martin and Bobby Rainey accounted for just three touchdowns and last year's third-round pick, Charles Sims, was sidelined half the season after an ankle surgery.

The Falcons were 5-1 against the NFC South last season, which factored into no team in the division finishing the year with a winning record. Weaknesses were exposed and prime position in the draft allowed each team to make significant changes and improvements. Tampa Bay got the top pick in the draft, the Falcons grabbed the No. 8 overall pick and New Orleans went into the draft with five selections in the first 78 picks. Division champion Carolina had three picks in the fifth-round to bring in more depth. With the teams so evenly matched last year, the organization that won this offseason will raise the division banner come playoff time.



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DRAFT CONTEST WINNER

Haralson shares unforgettable draft day experience

By Cole Erickson

The NFL Draft is one of the most anticipated events of the year for each organization and fanbase. For the incoming rookies that get selected each year, 265 individual moments of a lifelong dream coming true are broadcasted to the world. Each selection lights a fuse to cheer, analysis and a media explosion that follows the pick. But the brief moments as the commissioner reads the first and last name of the player are what this day is all about. Very few people will ever be able to share this life-changing moment with the players themselves.

The Equifax Atlanta Falcons NFL Draft Contest delivers this opportunity to one lucky fan each year. This year's contest offered season ticket holders an all-expense paid trip of a lifetime to Chicago for the draft. The promotion included airfare to Chicago, two nights in the draft hotel, \$1,000 spending money, a chance to walk the gold carpet and the ability to be a part of the Falcons 1st round pick announcement with Commissioner Roger Goddell.

Out of 10,000 season ticket holders who applied, the lucky winner of the Falcons Draft Contest was Brad Haralson from Atlanta. He was shocked to hear the news.

"It was pretty unbelievable because you always hear about people who win sweepstakes and I've never won anything quite like that in my life," said Haralson.

He brought his best friend Joey Arbuckle with him to enjoy the weekend's draft experience. The two best friends were able to hangout in the infamous 'Green Room' where top picks wait to take the stage.

DRAFT MAGIC

Haralson got to experience some behind the scenes things that changed his perspective of how the draft operates.

"We as fans see the draft as something cool and as this big production," explained Haralson. "But realistically for the teams and the players, it's a big business meeting."

He gained a new perspective towards the draft after seeing the big picture and the business aspect of the weekend. "Before I would look at the draft and see it as guys going up to announce names, but really it's a huge night not only for the teams, but for the players that are ultimately selected."

Haralson got the unique opportunity to take part in giving the commissioner the jersey for the Falcons first round selection, which turned out to be Clemson's record-setting pass rusher Vic Beasley Jr.

"Walking out on stage, and getting to hand the jersey to Commissioner Goddell was pretty surreal," reflected Haralson. "I'm humbled by the fact that I could take a small part in what'll hopefully be a long and fantastic career for Vic (Beasley)."

Adding to the excitement was as a long-time Falcons fan, Haralson loved the pickup and sees Beasley as a gamechanger on the field.

"Leading up to the draft as any Falcons fan would do, I studied into the potential edge rushers and other defensive guys," admitted Haralson. "There was a good feeling that we were going to get a pass rusher in the draft. Early on in the draft, during the process, Vic (Beasley) was the guy that not only myself wanted to see us get, but a ton of Falcons fans in the community wanted to see as well. Beasley was definitely one of the guys we all were really excited about just because of his ability to be a difference maker on the defensive side of the ball."

STARS EVERYWHERE

With all the Pro Football Hall of Famers and stars in the city during his trip, it is hard for Haralson to describe all he saw in those jam-packed two days in Chicago, but being able to see the pick come in seconds before the announcement was shared with the world was unforgettable for Haralson. He even got an all access experience to see where the jersey creations are done.

"There was a very small room off to the side of the stage, and when the pick got called in from the team to the NFL, the person inside that room would instantly grab the pick's name and put it on the jersey," Haralson was one of the first few people to know who the Falcons first round pick was. "Knowing that I was one of the first 10-15 people that knew the pick, if only for a few seconds was incredibly exciting."

Haralson and Arbuckle also got the chance to have a breakfast and a photo opportunity with Goddell.

"I was very impressed by the way he carried himself, considering how much pressure and scrutiny he is under. You could tell that he has a passion for the game and the experience," says Haralson.

Haralson was impressed with entire weekend, the hospitality of the Falcons and the presentation that the NFL put on for him and all the rest of the fans in attendance. "Everyone from top to bottom was a class act, and you can see they have a great passion for the game, the players and the fan experience."



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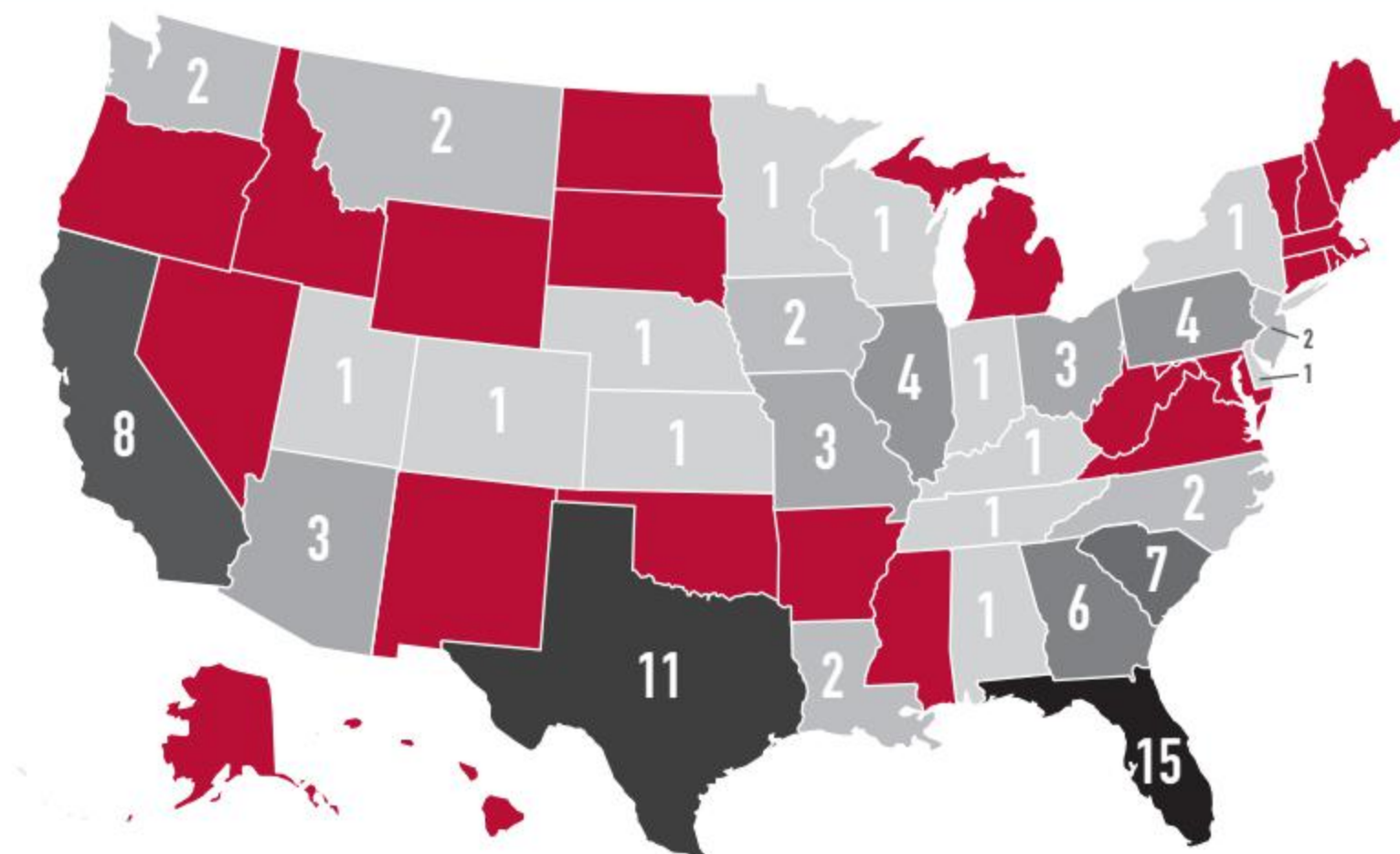


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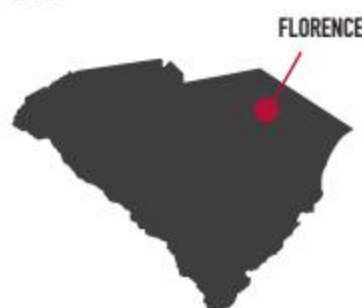


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ATLANTA FALCONS OUTREACH

Every year the Falcons create and run numerous community programs throughout metro Atlanta and the state of Georgia. Here is a look at a few of those programs through the lenses of Falcons photographers.





— GIVING BACK — **OFF THE FIELD** **DRIVES BRYANT'S SUCCESS**

By Lauren Goldstein





After a decade of bouncing around the Arena Football League, NFL Europe and the NFL, Matt Bryant finally found a franchise to call home with the Atlanta Falcons in 2009. Heading into the 2015 season, the 14-year pro holds the Falcons all-time highest field goal percentage at 88.6 percent among kickers with more than 10 attempts in an Atlanta uniform and owns the franchise record for most made field goals over 50 yards with 18. He is a perfect 222-for-222 kicking extra points. With each kick, the Falcons veteran seemingly reaches new career milestones on the field. The stability he has gained since joining the organization has allowed his impact off the field to continue growing as well.

"When I first got started with New York [Giants], I was just beginning as a kicker and starting off a very small fish in the sea," Bryant explained. "I told myself one day whenever I get established, I want to try and find something to put my name to or help out an organization."

DOING FOR OTHERS

After experiencing personal hardships throughout his career, losing a son to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and his father to ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), Bryant knew he was destined to do more for others than just entertaining fans on Sundays.

"When my son passed with SIDS, I was able to talk to other parents. People ask me questions. 'How did you do it? What is it like moving on and life afterwards?' You're able to comfort others because you live it, you understand it and can relate to those people," explained Bryant. "Unfortunately as life

happens, where things have affected me, you see how they affect others too."

MAN OF THE YEAR

Last December, Bryant became the second player in Falcons history (Warrick Dunn) to be awarded the Atlanta Falcons Walter Payton Man of the Year Award in back-to-back years. The award recognizes a player who has shown dedication and commitment to off-the-field community service activities.

"It's an honor to be recognized for anything that you do," said Bryant. "The thing about this award is you don't set out at the beginning of the year and say 'How many things can I do to try and get this award?' You do as much as you can because it's about trying to make a difference in someone else's world."

Last season, the Falcons kicker volunteered for a series of charities, including the Atlanta Falcons First Down for Fitness as an Ambassador. The program encourages children in third through seventh grade to stay active and live a healthy lifestyle. He has also served as a spokesperson for the Arby's Foundation and the March of Dimes Georgia Chapter and the ALS Foundation.

"Obviously I've been blessed with 14 years living out my dream," said Bryant, who first made an NFL roster with the New York Giants in 2002. "There's a whole lot of people that are not doing so well, so I am trying to share what I have in order to make a difference to someone else's life."

After years spent perfecting his mechanics and kicking technique and transforming into one of the most established kickers in the League, Bryant has more time to enjoy hobbies off the field. In the

summer of 2014, Bryant had an internship with the Georgia Aquarium where he was able to further expand his knowledge of sea creatures and grow an even deeper love for life under the sea.

"The first time I visited the Aquarium was when I was playing for Tampa and we would come to Atlanta to play," said Bryant, who spent 2005-08 with the Bucs. "I started to be intrigued with fish tanks and going to the aquarium while I was there [in Tampa]."

Bryant has made it a tradition to visit every aquarium he can when the Falcons travel to away games. "If you can get in front of a good exhibit and you can just sit down, I believe it is an art in motion," explained Bryant. "There's a sense of calming with a little bit of peace and quiet."

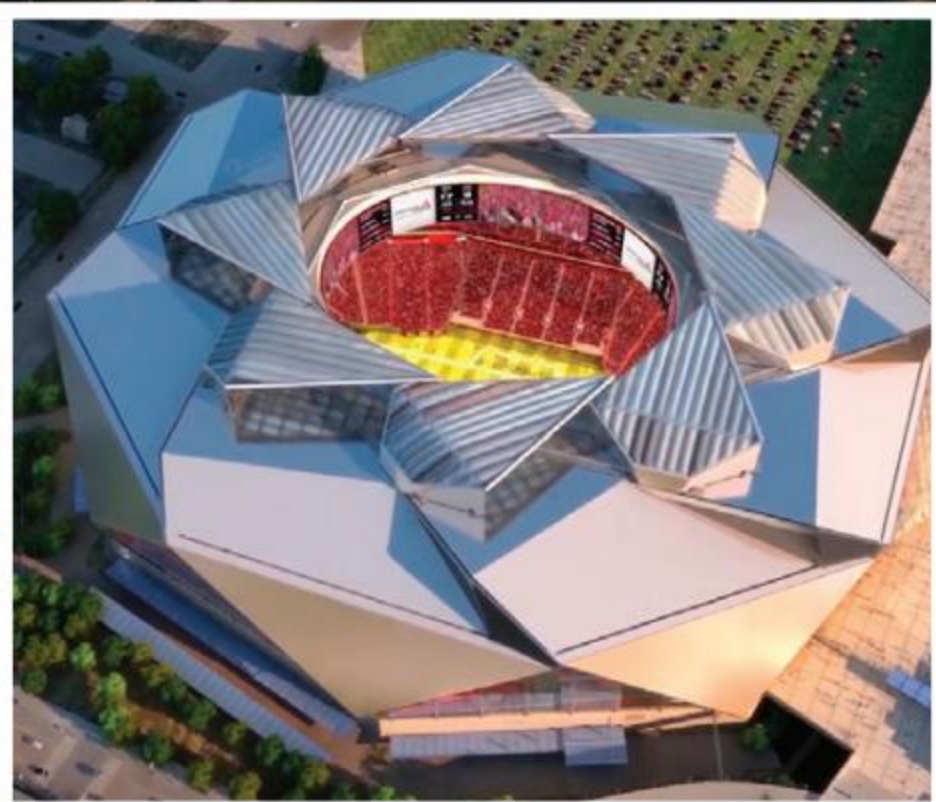
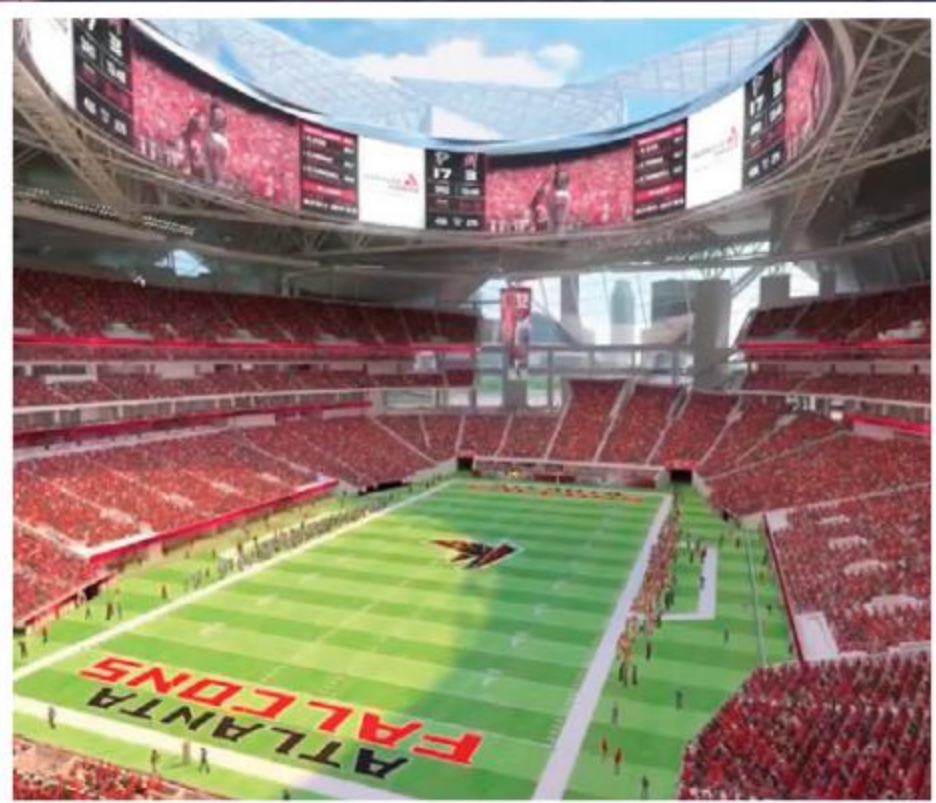
At the Bryant's beach house in Alabama stands an 1100-gallon aquarium that has become the focal point of his home. "It is amazing what it can do for you if you can get in the moment and enjoy it," said Bryant.

SHARING A PASSION

Recently Bryant shared his love of marine life and Atlanta sites with military families from across Georgia with children who are in the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). TAPS supports families who have been affected by losing loved ones in the military. Bryant treated the families to a visit to the World of Coca-Cola and a behind the scenes tour of Georgia Aquarium.

"It's mainly for the kids," said Bryant. "I just want to give them one day of happiness."

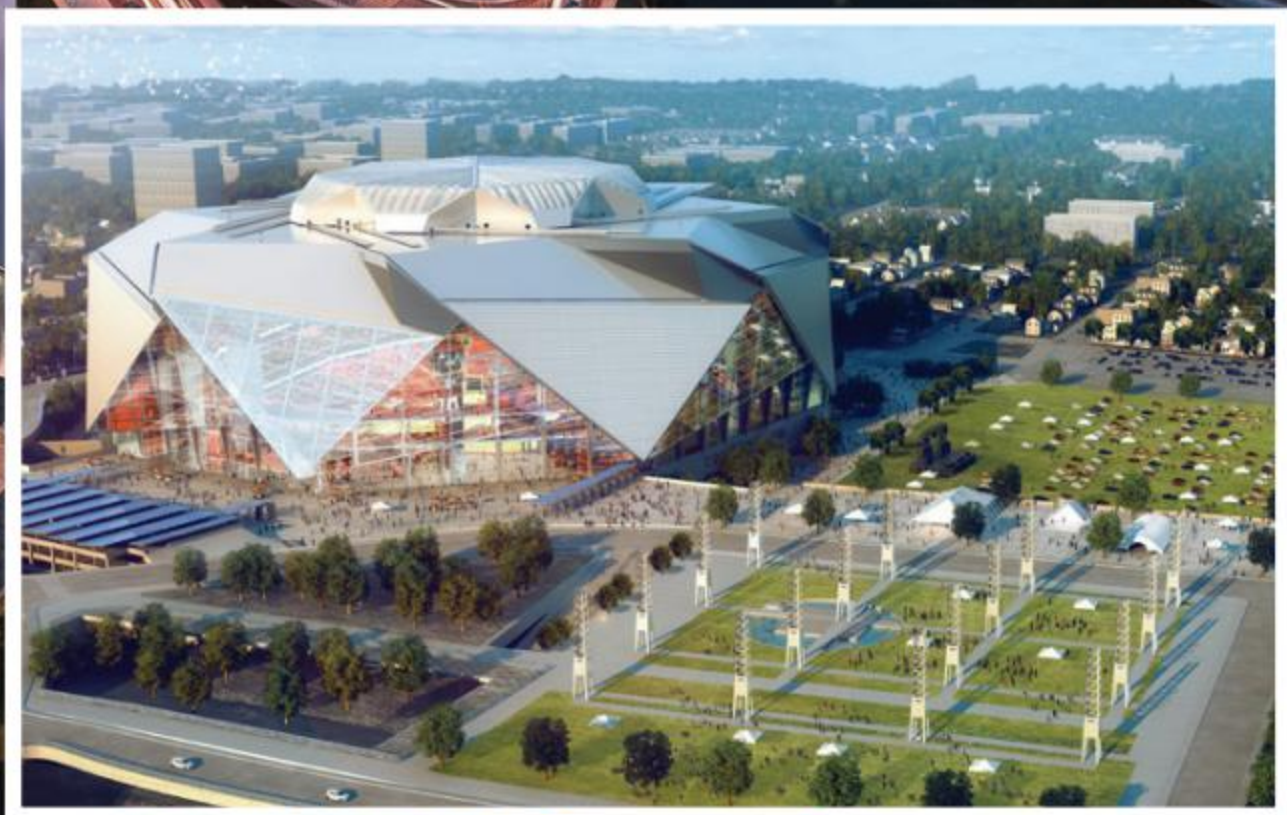
Giving back is second nature to Bryant, who believes his success on the gridiron has given him the ability to make a deeper impact off the field.



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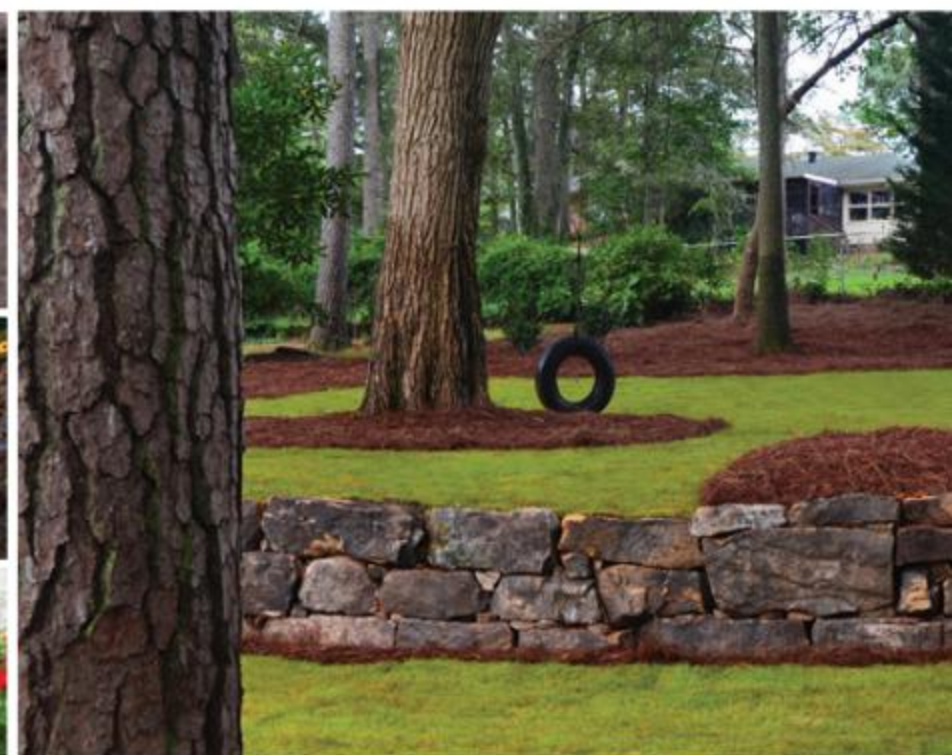


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FALCONS OPEN UP 50TH SEASON IN PRIME TIME

By Josh Reich

The Atlanta Falcons 50th season kicks off at home in a Monday Night Football showdown with the visiting Philadelphia Eagles. The 7:10 p.m., Sept. 14 kickoff is the first of 17 Monday Night Football matchups this season and opens a Week 1 Monday double-header with Minnesota and San Francisco occupying the nightcap at 10:20 ET.

SERIES HISTORY

The Falcons and Eagles have met in several historic moments throughout Atlanta's history, dating back to the Falcons inaugural season in 1966. The first time the Falcons took the NFL stage was in a preseason scrimmage against the Eagles. Since the inaugural dress rehearsal, the two teams have played a total of 28 games against each other, with Philadelphia leading the all-time series 15-12-1. History has remained intertwined between the two teams over the last 50 years. In 1978, the Falcons reached the playoffs for the first time in franchise history and hosted the Eagles in a wildcard matchup. Atlanta overcame a 13-0 deficit with five minutes left and recorded the franchise's first playoff win with a gutsy 14-13 victory.

The last time the Falcons opened their season at home on Monday Night Football, was also against the Eagles. The showdown came back in 2005 when the Falcons opened a 14-10 victory. Atlanta would go 3-0 in Monday Night Football games that season and would win 27-7 over Detroit in the franchise's first-ever Thanksgiving Day game, silencing many doubts that the Falcons could not handle the national spotlight. The last time Atlanta hosted Philly was a shootout in 2011, also a home opener, which the Falcons won 35-31. In 2012, the Falcons added another win over the Eagles in a 30-

17 Week 8 road victory that saw Matt Ryan throw for 262 yards and three touchdowns.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

There are plenty of storylines for both teams entering their respective 2015 campaigns. For the Falcons, it is the chance to set the tone as a new era begins. Dan Quinn has proven the ability to coach his guys up to play in big games and the football world will be watching the Super Bowl winning coordinator in his head coaching debut. New defensive coordinator Richard Smith won four AFC West titles in his four seasons leading the Denver linebackers and we will get a first look at the veteran coach's system that is filled with speed and young talent. Smith is known as a linebacker guru and his crafty pass rush will depend on the anticipated debut of rookie Vic Beasley Jr. There is a new face calling the plays on offense as well, as Kyle Shanahan will take over these duties. Not many offensive coordinators get the pleasure of inheriting a Pro-Bowl quarterback like the one Shanahan gets with Ryan. We know what kind of damage Julio Jones and Roddy White can do in the passing game, but the Shanahan zone-blocking scheme will feature a revolving door of speed in the backfield and will keep defenses guessing.

Like the Falcons, Philadelphia is bringing a share of new faces into 2015 as well. Quarterback Sam Bradford will take over Chip Kelly's fast-paced offense. They also swapped running backs, sending LeSean McCoy to Buffalo and signing last year's NFL rushing leader DeMarco Murray.

Atlanta is yet to face the high-tempo offense Kelly brought from the University of Oregon to Philadelphia in 2013. As for the Eagles defense,

their offseason focused on bolstering a secondary that gave up 30 touchdown passes last year. Ex-Seahawk Byron Maxwell was brought in at cornerback and this year's second-round pick Eric Rowe can play safety or corner at 6-foot-1, 205 pounds. Ryan and the Falcons offense will be a steep challenge for this brand new secondary.

Ryan is 4-3 in season openers and helped come away with a huge 37-34 overtime win over the Saints in last year's Week 1 tilt. Matt Bryant put the nail in the Saints coffin with a 52-yard, game-winning field goal in overtime. That game set up Atlanta's 30-14 win in New Orleans that completed the season sweep of the rival Saints. The Eagles also had a strong performance in Week 1 of last year, beating Jacksonville 34-17 at home. That win propelled Philadelphia to a 10-win season. The Eagles are 7-3 in their last 10 openers, with five of those wins coming on the road. Atlanta has won six of their last 10 openers, with three of those wins coming in the Dome.

PRIME TIME

Not that Falcons fans need any help getting excited for the 2015 home opener, but there is always more buzz surrounding a game that is played in prime time. Not only will Falcons fans get to watch the beginning of a new era in Atlanta football, but the entire nation will be tuning in to the contest on ESPN. Both Quinn and Kelly have stellar records in Monday or Thursday night games. Quinn's Seahawks were a perfect 6-0 while he was the defensive coordinator and Kelly's Eagles are 4-1 in week-day showdowns. The atmosphere in the Dome will be electric and another historic moment in franchise history will feature the NFC's 'Battle of the Birds'.

2015 ATLANTA FALCONS CHEERLEADERS



Row 1: AnneMarie, Jess, Kristen, Dana, Cecilia, Sydney, Jasmine, Allison, Bethany Row 2: Amy, Kiley, Alexa, Brianna, Nicole, Alexandria, Leslie, Kelsey, Macy Row 3: Rie, Cara, Taneshia, Cayla, Megan, Colleen, Kiva, Aleria, Jamie Row 4: Mallory, Kirstyn, Jordan, Katy, Ashley, Brittany, Riley, Eisha, Suzi Sponsors: Atlanta Dental Spa, Gotta Dance Atlanta, GTM Sportswear, Jamison Shaw Hairdressers, LA Fitness, Midtown Athletic Club, Palm Beach Tan, Inc, Pur Minerals Cosmetics, New Era, Style Plus.





Behind the Pom Poms

Falcons Cheerleaders More Than What Meets The Eye

By Chip Pogue

Nailing the auditions and becoming one of just 36 women who will grace the Falcons sidelines this season was the first of many challenges Atlanta's 2015 cheerleader squad had to conquer. The Falconettes began their journey in the 1960's and have been evolving ever since but some things have remained the same. The women represent what the organization is all about on the field and in the community. On the field they are in sync and run through their routines smoothly, off the field their goal is to make a positive impact everywhere they go.

Being a cheerleader at the professional level is an experience much like being at the top of any craft; it can be challenging at times but also rewarding. Chato Hendrix, the Falcons cheerleading coordinator, explains, "This is the professional level. You have the best of the best. You come in and you were the former captain of your dance team or the captain of your cheer team but now you're with 35 other former captains. Being able to come in and take in the experience versus having that leadership role and doing things a different way from how you did them in the past. A lot of these girls are used to being in the front row and being the superstar and now you're with 35 other superstars, it's different."

Hendrix has been with the organization for 18 years, including her cheerleading days. She was a member of the Atlanta Falcons cheerleading squad during Super Bowl XXXIII and was in grad school at the time. Since her time as a cheerleader she has earned her doctorate in Psychology and in 2012 married Doug Hendrix. Fittingly, Doug proposed in front of a sold out Georgia Dome as Atlanta defeated Tennessee 23-17.

STRONG LEADERSHIP

Hendrix's leadership and dedication to the community and the organization is exemplified through the women that are selected to the squad. She has helped carry on the legacy of the cheerleaders being community leaders that her mentors passed down to her during her rookie 1998 season.

"The girls are very involved in supporting the organization's platform," said Hendrix. "We also are open to supporting other civic and charity events in

the community. People can book the cheerleaders to come and interact with their guest and their patrons."

THE GOLDEN TICKET

Tryouts for this year's squad were held at the College Football Hall of Fame for the first time. Over 200 women participated in the tryouts. The auditions were open to the public and an audience came to give moral support to the cheerleaders.

"It was very exciting," said Hendrix. "It really gave us a different atmosphere, being on turf and in a sports arena."

Since only 36 women are selected for the team, you have to separate yourself from the rest of the girls. Bringing the 'wow' factor includes the typical qualities cheerleaders have like a positive attitude and beautiful smile. The fans see the flawless routines on game-day and can imagine the hours practice, but the lives beyond the pompoms are the unseen aspect of a Falcons cheerleaders that is the most impressive.

This year's team has women from many different walks of life. Their jobs include registered nurse, realtor, executive legal assistant, ministry, chemist and many balance being mothers as well. It just shows you that there is far more beyond these women's talents as cheerleaders.

After making the team, the real work for the cheerleaders begins. They have practice every Tuesday and Thursday but as Hendrix recognizes that is just the tip of the iceberg. "Ninety percent of the cheerleaders' commitment is volunteering in the community and making a difference with young girls and fans," explained Hendrix.

Different members of the team make hundreds of appearances each year. This gives each girl many opportunities to support each organization and further the Falcons reach into the community. Over the years the Falcons cheerleaders have had the opportunity to travel around the world, visiting troops and last season traveling with the team to London. It gave the squad an opportunity to spread the Falcon brand and bring the excitement of the NFL throughout the city of London. 10 girls traveled to London ahead of the team and attended

events around the city. The events ranged from participating in a Play 60 event to performing at a soccer match. The entire squad performed during the game at Wembley Stadium. The girls also had the chance to tour the city visiting Abbey Road, Buckingham Palace and Big Ben.

Everywhere the girls go they want to make a lasting impression on the people they meet. "Someone who attended that event should walk away saying wow I met an Atlanta Falcons cheerleader," said Hendrix. "Our goal is to make an impact that's so much more than just signing an autograph or taking a picture, it is really connecting with the guests at these events."

FUTURE FALCONS

Another way the Falcons cheerleaders make a difference in the community is through the junior cheerleaders program. Each season the junior cheerleaders perform at one game with the squad. The program is open to girls ages 5-16 and there are no tryouts, meaning everyone is accepted into the program no matter their skill level.

"The junior cheerleaders program is such a great experience because a lot of the instructors are actual Falcons cheerleaders so the girls get an opportunity to not only perform with them at a game each year, but also attend clinics and have interactions with these girls," said Hendrix.

The women that make the final cut of becoming an Atlanta Falcons cheerleader are truly amazing inside and out. They must be extremely organized as they juggle cheering, event engagements and their personal careers. Being a part of the squad requires each cheerleader to have a certain level of structure to their lives. The team is very flexible with the girls and allows them to pick the events that work best into their daily schedules. The Atlanta Falcons cheerleaders are a team. They seek uniformity with their rhythm and routines and stand for the same community-driven goals. But ultimately, it is the diverse backgrounds and individuals that come together to achieve all of this that have made the brand so strong.



FAN EXPERIENCE

By Kyle Sandy

Ready for Lift Off with Mike Gomes

No two sporting events are equal and like the different variables we see on the field from game-to-game, the experiences of each fan in attendance differs from individual to individual.

On Sept. 11, 2014, AMB Sports & Entertainment Group announced the appointment of Mike Gomes as Senior Vice President of Fan Experience. The newly created position gives Gomes the reins of taking over the gameday experience and molding it into one of the most unique and exciting atmospheres in sports.

Gomes expressed his plans with AMBSE when he first arrived. "I'm excited to join an organization with similar objectives and values and look forward to working with this very talented team. Our goal will be to develop an unparalleled experience not only for Falcons fans over the next three seasons, but for all guests of the state-of-the-art facility we'll call home in 2017."

Gomes joins the project with two decades of knowledge and years of experience.

"I spent 20 years with Disney," explained Gomes on what made him get into the business of guest experience. "Everything that Disney does is based on the guest experience so it ended up sort of being a part of my DNA."

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Over his two decades with Disney, he learned many different things as Vice President of Experience Development and Media Strategy. In his time there, he held responsibilities ranging from product management, web/mobile development and ecommerce, business development, technical strategy and more. Gomes said that he can learn from past successes and failures.

"The fan is engaged at all different parts of your organization. They're working with your sales group, they're working with your services team, they're working with your operations team at the Dome," stated Gomes. "So to make sure that all the different parts of the organization are thinking the same and in an aligned point of view is one of the things I certainly learned from Disney."

Making the foray from Disney theme parks to sports has its similarities and differences. "I think

from a similarity perspective, both deal with things in mass. At a given Falcons game you're going to have 65,000-70,000 people," said Gomes on how both focus on the movement of people, the ticket process and parking. "We aren't talking about doing things for tens and twenties of people, we are talking about doing things for thousands at a time and that's a whole different way of having to think about problem solving."

MOBILE IMPROVEMENTS

For the 2015 season, Gomes is looking to make strides in the overall experience for the fan and make it something they can connect with. He preached the importance of immersing fans in a multitude of ways and making each part of the gameday experience interactive and personally tailored to each guest that walks through the doors. He wants fans to "feel like they are a part of this bigger experience, rather than simply just sitting there watching the game or the event."

Something that Gomes is excited about this season is the improvements being made to the Atlanta Falcons app and all the great features it will now have. "Fans and season ticket holders have the ability to manage their tickets right through the Falcons app. They can buy tickets, sell tickets, trade their tickets and get access to the venue without having to do something different."

Another program which has great exclusive benefits is the Memories program. "Our Memories program is where our season ticket members get really special and exclusive access to things you can't even buy," explained Gomes. "Getting access to be on the field, getting visits from Freddie Falcon, getting special other opportunities to connect to our players and coaching staff or our gameday experience is going to grow dramatically this year. Those are the types of things that continue to create those special moments that cause fans to want to come back again and again."

Still roughly two years away, the new Atlanta stadium set to open sometime in 2017, will give Gomes and the rest of AMBSE a chance to really make a mark with some of the most stunning views and technology around in the state-of-the-art stadium.

"Everything from the fact that you'll feel like the aspects and experiences are outdoors because of not only the open air roof, but the fact that many of the sides of the building are glass so that you can not only see out but you can have natural sunlight come in," said Gomes of the incredible feel that the new stadium will bring. He described everything beyond the physical structure as a "blank sheet of paper" for him and his staff to mold it into an artistic masterpiece of an experience.

Aside from football, other events will take place at the new stadium including NCAA Final Fours, NCAA football and of course the arrival of Atlanta's new Major League Soccer franchise, Atlanta United FC. Gomes spoke about the versatility of the building and his staff on making each experience suited towards the event.

"We think about the multipurpose use of the facility, making sure the fan experience for our Major League Soccer Atlanta United fans is unique and appropriate and fantastic and energizing for them because people consume soccer very differently. And they have different levels of expectations of how the stadium will meet their needs on gameday."

RAIN OR SHINE

In sports, the product of the field can usually be a barometer of how fans interact at games. Gomes is thankful that he enters a situation with such a loyal fan base that supports their team no matter what.

"We are fortunate to have such a great base of outstanding Falcons fans who really connect with the team and do root for the team. We used to say at Disney you can enjoy the experience regardless of weather," said Gomes when comparing the team's success to the atmosphere created by the fans at the game.

By putting forth an incredible experience no matter the outcome of the game, Gomes hopes that it allows patrons to say "I came together as a community in a very social way and yeah maybe my team didn't win but I still had a great time. It was still really fun to be here and connect with other fans, friends and family members and we can look back years from now and go 'we don't remember who won that game but we remember we had so much fun.'"

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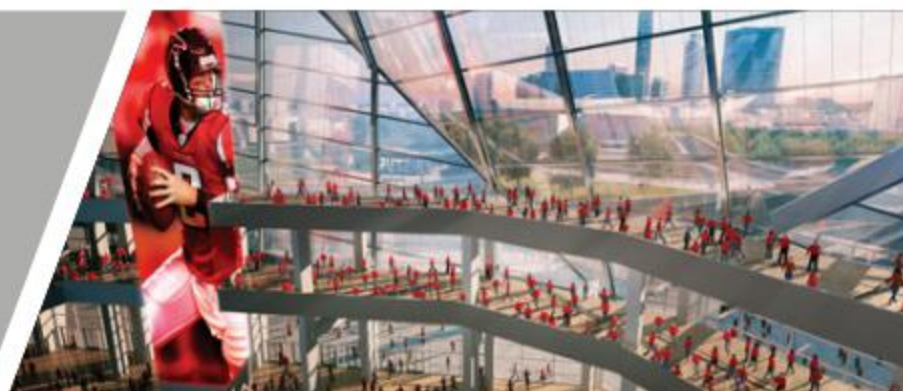
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STRIDES BEING MADE IN CONSTRUCTION OF EXQUISITE NEW ATLANTA STADIUM

BY KYLE SANDY



AMB Sports & Entertainment (AMBSE), which includes the Atlanta Falcons, the new Atlanta stadium project and MLS Atlanta, will be opening a new state-of-the-art stadium in 2017. The current Georgia Dome has housed the Falcons since 1992, but bigger and better things are on the horizon.

On February 18, 2014, AMBSE announced that Scott Jenkins would become the General Manager of the new Atlanta stadium. He has been instrumental in providing insight and helping with the construction of the new facility. Jenkins has years of experience and has moved across the country from Seattle to man the new position. Jenkins spent the past seven-and-a-half years as vice president of ballpark operations at Safeco Field for the Seattle Mariners and will bring stability to the new stadium with his experience.

Scott jumped at the opportunity to come to Atlanta and be a part of something special. "My interest in this project was sparked the first time I saw renderings of the stadium," Jenkins said. "Mr. Blank's vision to create a cutting edge design will set a new standard for the stadium experience. I couldn't be more thrilled to join the effort to bring this vision to life."

The construction and progress of the stadium has been going great, according to Jenkins. The upper concourse has already begun to take shape with beams being constructed regularly. "You're going to see the concrete structure assembled by the end of the summer. That will get the base of the building done, then it will be the roof structure," Jenkins explained. "This summer you're going to see a giant crane installed that will be inside the seating bowl area. That crane is going to start to erect the roof structure."

Two milestones will be accomplished by the end of this summer and the new Atlanta stadium will truly begin to look like a stadium with the installation of the precast concrete seating bowl and erection of the roof trusses. The process has been running smoothly with no hitches as the stadium is less than two years from being completed.

STATE-OF-THE-ART

Scott is most excited about how the stadium will look and function. "Architecturally, the building is stunning. It's breaking new ground architecturally and also is breaking new ground from a fan experience standpoint." The impressive roof, which opens like an eight-Blade camera lens, will be one of the first things guests notice, but Jenkins says there is even more to get excited about. "The way the building is designed with the halo video board wrapping the opening is something no one has ever done before. It will be the largest video board in sports."

It was important to AMBSE to select someone with experience managing stadiums with similar retracting roofs as the general manager for the new stadium. Jenkins worked at Miller Park with the Milwaukee Brewers and most recently Safeco Field with the Seattle Mariners; both facilities featured retractable roofs. "When I saw the design for this particular roof I stopped in my tracks, 'Wow, that's really cool. How did they do that?'"

The time for new Atlanta stadium's roof to close will be half the time it takes for most operational roofs to close and will span six minutes.

Jenkins' goal as General Manager is to provide a memorable experience for every fan that steps foot in the stadium. "In my 20-plus years of experience I've picked up a lot of knowledge on how to run a building physically and how to run it from a guest experience standpoint," explained Jenkins. "But the other thing I'm really excited about is working with Rich McKay, Arthur Blank and our talented stadium team; Arthur's vision and commitment to the project is second to none."

STRONG MANAGEMENT

With all of Jenkins' experience in Major League Baseball, it won't be his first rodeo when it comes to managing a football stadium. Before his time with the Mariners, Jenkins served as vice president of stadium operations and facility management for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Rich McKay, the current President and CEO of the Falcons, also has experience when it comes to opening a new stadium. Before joining Atlanta in 2003, McKay was the President and General Manager of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and oversaw the construction of Raymond James Stadium. A lot has changed since 1998 when the Ray Jay opened and McKay is cognizant of that. "Some people say it's 100 percent different, some people say it's 500 percent different and some people say it's 1000 percent different. This is a million-percent different project."

One of the major differences besides having a roof, the size of the building and having total say in the design is the unmatched amenities which will be provided. McKay explained how each fan, no matter where he or she is sitting, will get a top-notch experience. "We've tried to make this building where the amenities apply to all and one of the places that starts with is the scoreboard."

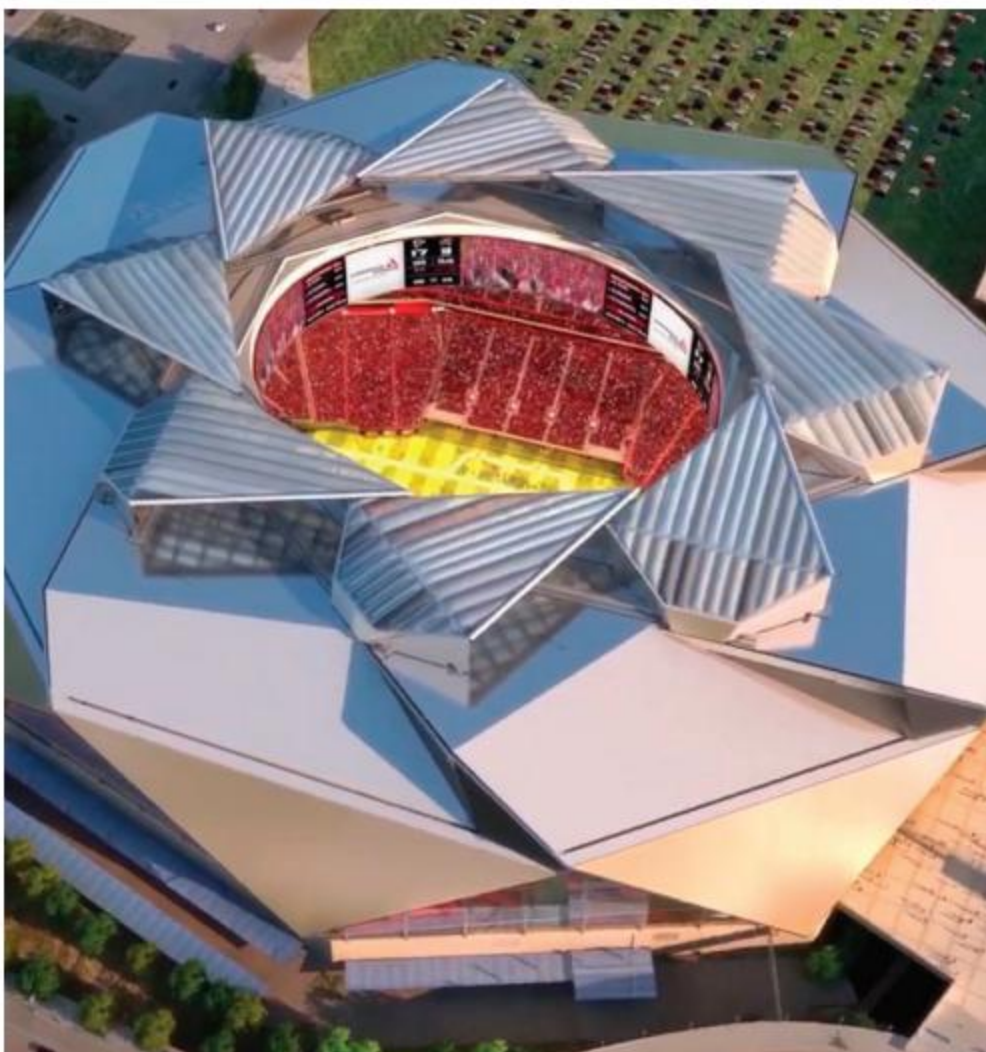
The 54,000 sq. foot LED halo board is one of the many features that will catch a visitor's eye in a heartbeat. "To give you perspective, if you took both the scoreboards that are at the ends in the Georgia Dome, those add up to 4,800 sq. feet of LED, so the difference is more than noticeable."

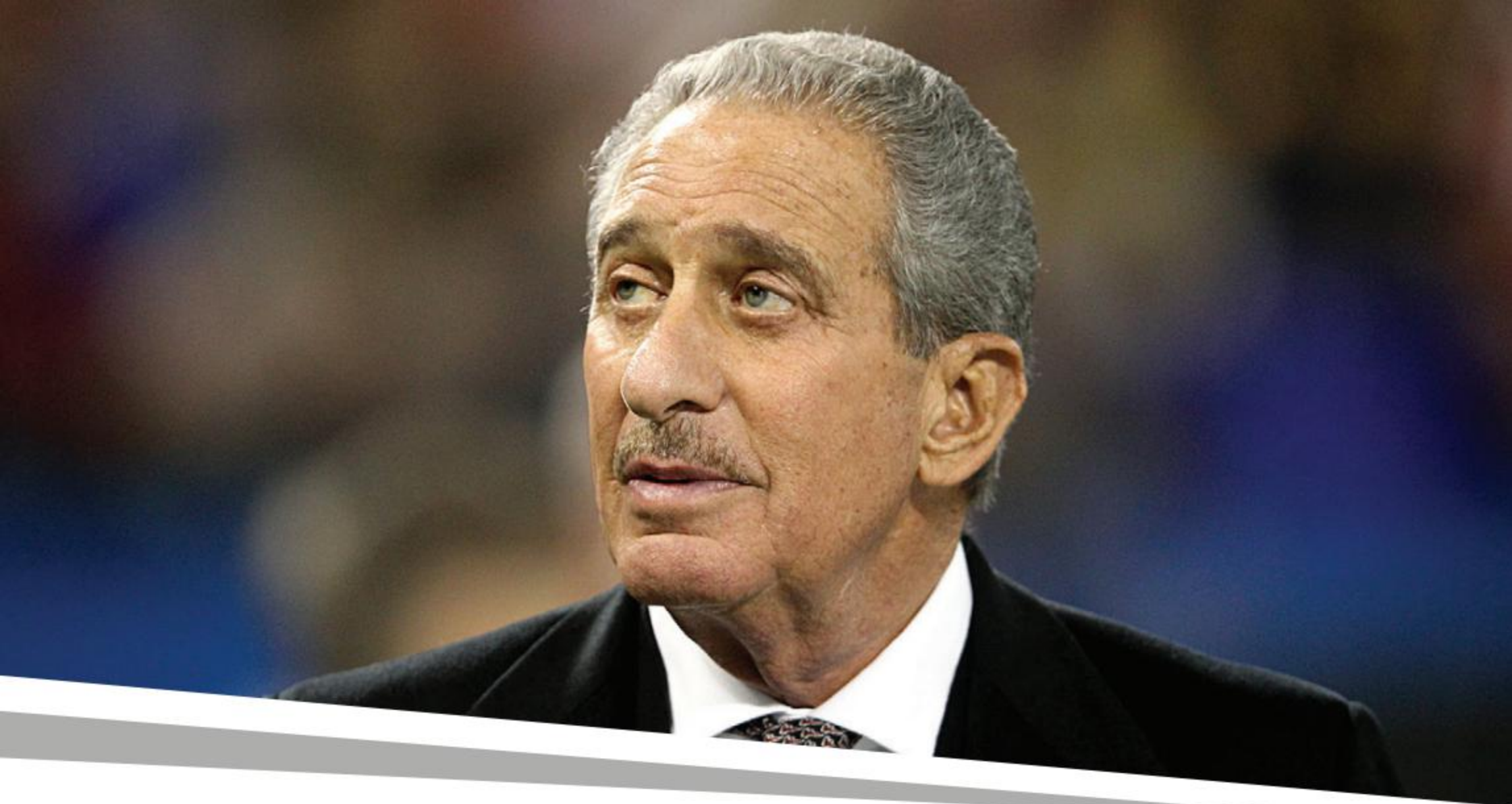
It is important to offer fans as many options as possible when it comes to merchandise, food and drinks and even restrooms. Compared to the Georgia Dome, the new stadium will have wider concourses, which will allow for easier flow throughout the building and will feature 65 percent more points of sale, which will alleviate long wait times for food and beverage.

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWN

The new Atlanta stadium will not only be a state-of-the-art facility but it will also become a recognizable structure worldwide with its one-of-a-kind design. "That was Arthur's charge," McKay said. "Let's build an iconic building that gives Atlanta, Georgia and the whole region a signature."

With two years to go before opening, the new Atlanta stadium has already started to become a focal point for the city moving forward. Expect that when 2017 rolls around, Atlanta will be a top destination for those all over the world.





OWNER & CHAIRMAN

ARTHUR BLANK

Falcons Owner & Chairman Arthur Blank, widely known in the business community for building the world's largest home improvement retailer as co-founder of The Home Depot, employed the same business skills that made Home Depot a success during his 2015 offseason recalibration of the Falcons football team.

After releasing former Head Coach Mike Smith from the final year of his contract, Blank and key members of his executive team embarked upon a 36-day search for a new head coach. Blank emerged from that process on February 2 to publicly introduce former Seattle Seahawks Defensive Coordinator Dan Quinn as the Falcons 16th head coach as the club enters its 50th season of football.

"This is an exciting day for the Atlanta Falcons franchise and our fans," Blank said at Quinn's introductory news conference. "Dan is a talented football coach who has a deep and diverse history in the game, which will serve us well. As we got to know Dan during the interview process, it became clear that he has a definitive plan for our football team and what it will take to win on a consistent basis."

He also has a proven ability to develop players by maximizing their individual strengths. For these and many other reasons, Dan was our top pick, and I'm confident our players, staff, fans and community will be proud to have him represent the Falcons."

Quinn, 44, was the architect of Seattle's top-ranked defense which helped propel the Seahawks to back-to-back Super Bowl appearances including

a 43-8 rout of the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XLVIII. He rolled into Atlanta armed with three key components all coaches in professional football must have - confidence, commitment and a plan for success.

The affable and charismatic Quinn, a disciple of Seahawks Head Coach Pete Carroll, quickly went to work in Atlanta to retool every facet of his Falcons team.

"I'm about finding all of the unique stuff our players have and it's our job as a coaching staff to find ways to feature each player," Quinn said. "I am not interested in what a guy can't do; I am interested in what he can do, and that's going to be our approach as we move our program forward."

Quinn, Falcons General Manager Thomas Dimitroff and their staffs spent the offseason together evaluating and planning the roster for the 2015 season.

"I can't tell you how pleased I am with how well Thomas and Dan and their respective staffs worked together this offseason in evaluating our roster and adding players via free agency and the draft," Blank said at the club's state of the franchise event in June. "There was a real spirit of collaboration among both groups and I thought the outstanding results of our 2015 draft class clearly reflected that."

In just four months, Quinn, dubbed by several of his players as "the coolest coach in the NFL" has created an intensely competitive environment in Flowery Branch where energy, enthusiasm and

competition are now hallmarks of Falcons football.

"We've got three rules here for everyone associated with our football team," Quinn said. "First and foremost, we are always going to protect the team and you do that by being a good teammate. Second, we will offer no excuses and no explanations. And third, we will all be on time. Those are our rules and we all will follow them."

One of Quinn's immediate tasks is rebuilding a Falcons defensive unit that finished at or near the bottom in most NFL defensive statistical categories last season. He brings to Atlanta a proven 4-3 under front seven scheme aided by a three-deep secondary and a movable chess piece in the strong safety. Quinn's defenses in Seattle were aggressive and attacking units that emphasized stopping the run and affecting the quarterback. The Seahawks were one of the NFL's best at forcing turnovers and giving the football back to their offense.

"The roster is different here in Atlanta, but the emphasis will remain the same," Quinn said. "When our fans watch us play, I want them to walk away saying that we are a fast team, we are a physical team and we are a team that understands how to finish games."

Prior to the 2013 and 2014 NFL seasons, the Falcons had been a team that definitely knew how to successfully close out and win tight games. From 2008-12 and before a rash of bad breaks and injuries led to a cumulative 10-22 record in 2013 and 2014, Atlanta was one of the NFL's elite teams



"I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN BRINGING THE BEST PEOPLE TOGETHER, CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT, GIVING THEM THE RESOURCES THEY NEED, BEING A CHEERLEADER FOR THEM AND MAKING SURE THE CULTURE IS SET IN PLACE BEFORE GETTING OUT OF THE WAY AND ALLOWING THEM TO DO WHAT THEY NEED TO DO."

at closing out opponents when holding the lead over three quarters.

Atlanta's impressive five year run from 2008-2012 included two number one seeds in the NFC playoffs (2010, 2012), a team-record three consecutive playoffs berths (2010-12), four double-digit winning seasons (2008, 2010-12), two 13-win seasons (2010, 2012), two NFC South Division championships (2010, 2012) and 20 players named to the NFC Pro Bowl team.

"This is a tough and competitive league," Blank said. "No one connected with our organization was happy about how things transpired for our team last season. We didn't perform very well for a variety of reasons, including injuries player assessment miscalculations and we needed to make some significant changes.

"We've been one of the top teams in the league," Blank added. "We've been a big part of playoff discussions that are reserved for the NFL's elite teams. We've got the internal infrastructure in place to quickly get back to where we belong. I will make no predictions, but I like the direction our team is headed in for the 2015 season."

IT TAKES A TEAM

Since Blank acquired the Falcons in 2002, the team has made the playoffs six times in 13 seasons. Under Blank's leadership, the Falcons front office has also seen unprecedented success. Three years before he purchased the Falcons, the club averaged about 37,000 season ticket holders per year. Since 2002, the Falcons have never sold fewer than 50,000 season tickets in any year. Additionally, during the same period of time, the club has sold out 102 of 104 regular season games and is currently riding a streak of seven consecutive sellout seasons.

"I have been blessed here with a great team of people," Blank said. "I have always believed in bringing the best people together, creating the right environment, giving them the resources they need, being a cheerleader for them and making sure the culture is set in place before getting out of the way and allowing them to do what they need to do."

Blank is also a key contributor to many of the NFL's major committees. He currently chairs the NFL Audit Committee and Compensation Committee and he is a member of the League's Finance, Legislative and Workplace Diversity committees.

The increasing relevance of the Falcons has provided numerous opportunities for the franchise and city of Atlanta to be showcased on nationally-televised games. With two prime time games on national television this season, Atlanta will have participated in 17 prime time regular season games over the past five years.

"Our exposure through prime time games over the years speaks directly to the outstanding

performances of our players and coaches," Blank said. "Make no mistake, however, that our larger goal remains to perform under the worldwide spotlight of the Super Bowl. There are 31 other teams out there that want the Lombardi Trophy just as much as we do, so we have to stay diligent to remain a relevant team."

NEW ATLANTA STADIUM

In May 2014, Blank and the Falcons broke ground on a new retractable roof stadium that will open in 2017. In addition to being a new home for the Falcons, the stadium will also be home to Atlanta United FC, a new Major League Soccer team that was awarded to Blank in April 2014 and will begin play in 2017. The facility will also host other premier sports and entertainment events throughout the year.

"Our goal is for the new building to become a destination site for sports and entertainment guests from all over the world," Blank stated. "We not only want the new stadium to become a landmark for the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia, we want it to be a game changer when it comes to stadium design and the guest experience inside the building."

The new stadium provides an enhanced opportunity to attract new marquee events to the city of Atlanta, such as the FIFA World Cup, College Football National Championship Game and, of course, a Super Bowl.

"Atlanta has all of the attributes needed to successfully host a Super Bowl," Blank said. "The new stadium adds another premier element to a successful bid for a future game."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE/IMPROVING LIVES

Starting with The Home Depot and continuing with his current businesses - the Falcons, PGA TOUR Superstore, Mountain Sky Guest Ranch, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and Atlanta United - Blank's business and personal values underscore the importance of giving back and becoming part of the community.

During his 23 years with The Home Depot, the company donated more than \$113 million to communities and Home Depot associates provided hundreds of thousands of hours of personal volunteer time.

Since its inception in 1995, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation has granted more than \$300 million to charitable organizations, with approximately two-thirds of the total focused on metro Atlanta, including the Historic Westside neighborhoods of Vine City, English Avenue and Castleberry Hill.

In 2013, Blank publicly committed to making further significant investments in these communities by creating the Westside Neighborhood Prosperity



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Fund, which will invest in catalytic projects that ignite positive change and improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods surrounding the new Atlanta stadium. The foundation has pledged \$15 million to contribute to large-scale transformational projects that result in lasting impact for community residents.

In 2014, Blank's foundation launched its first major project, Westside Works, a long-term neighborhood-based program focused on creating job training and employment opportunities for residents. Westside Works placed nearly 200 men and women in living wage jobs in construction, health care, culinary arts and auto technician sectors during its first 12 months of operation.

"We've been committed to the Westside neighborhoods for many years," Blank noted. "Building a new stadium is the relatively easy part of our overall project in that area; the larger challenge is in having a positive and meaningful impact on the surrounding communities in the process. My family, along with the Falcons, feels a sense of responsibility to be part of that positive change."

Community engagement is a priority for the Falcons, as well. The Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation invests in innovative approaches to increase time kids spend in physical activity and to give more children access to healthy foods. Since 2002, the foundation has awarded more than \$20 million in grants to nonprofit organizations serving children across Georgia. As a leader in the Georgia SHAPE initiative, the youth foundation is helping Georgia elementary schools reach more than 350,000 students through the Power Up for 30 program, which adds 30 minutes of physical activity during the school day. The foundation also

has donated \$730,000 worth of equipment to 131 groups in 46 counties across Georgia, expanding opportunities for 68,000 youth to be physically active.

In addition, Atlanta Falcons players, coaches, cheerleaders, associates and their spouses remain among the most active community citizens in the NFL, contributing an average of 3,000 hours of their collective time each season. Much of this time is spent participating in Atlanta Falcons community relations programs and initiatives that support a variety of issues and activities, including health and fitness, breast cancer awareness, combating hunger, the development of youth/prep football, Salute to Service and outreach in underserved communities.

"It's important to that everyone in our family of businesses understands our collective responsibility to contribute to the communities in which we all live and work," Blank stressed.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

A native of Flushing, N.Y., Blank attended Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, where he competed on the football, baseball and track teams. He received his bachelor of science degree in business administration with distinction from Babson College, where he was active in a variety of extracurricular activities. Blank co-founded The Home Depot in 1978 and retired from the company as co-chairman in 2001. At the time of his retirement, The Home Depot was a component of the Dow Jones Industrial Average and one of Fortune magazine's "Global Most Admired Companies." During Blank's last year as CEO of the

company, The Home Depot ranked first in social responsibility in an annual survey conducted by Harris Interactive, Inc.

Blank is recognized throughout the country for his personal and professional achievements. In 2012, he received an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Georgia. In 2011, he was the recipient of the Freeing Voices, Changing Lives Award from the American Institute for Stuttering and in 2010, he was recognized by the Council for Quality Growth for his philanthropic endeavors as well as his significant contributions to economic development and quality of life. In 2006, he was named a Distinguished American by the Walter Camp Football Foundation, which annually recognizes an individual who has utilized his or her talents to attain great success in business, private life or public service.

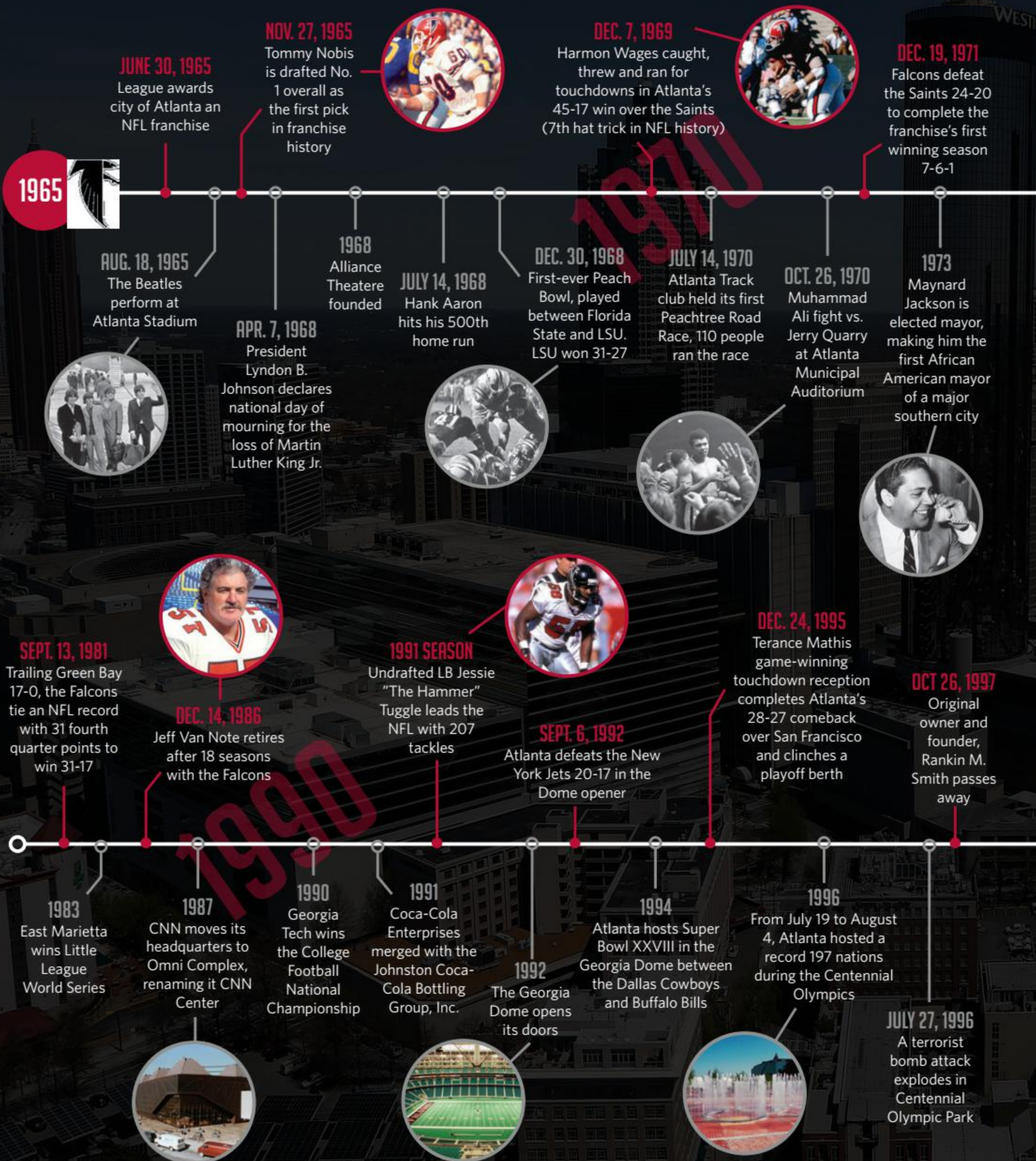
Also in 2006, Blank was inducted into the Junior Achievement U.S. Business Hall of Fame and was awarded an honorary doctor of humanities degree from Furman University. In 2005, he was named National Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young. In 2003, for the second time in three years, Blank was named Georgia's Most Respected CEO by Georgia Trend magazine and in 2002, he was inducted into Georgia State University's Business Hall of Fame.

Blank serves on the board of trustees of The Carter Center, Inc. and The Cooper Institute.

Blank has six children and four grandchildren. He is engaged to Angie Macuga, who has three children. A strong believer in work-life balance, Blank makes time daily for physical activity and spending time with family.



FROM NOBIS TO A NEW HOME





A look at how the city of Atlanta and the Atlanta Falcons have evolved over the last 50 years



JAN. 28, 1975

Falcons trade for No. 1 overall pick to select Cal QB Steve Bartkowski

1977 SEASON

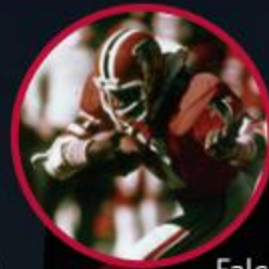
The Gritz Blitz defense gives up 129 points all season, which still stands as an NFL record

NOV. 12, 1978

"Big Ben Right" Alfred Jackson catches a 57-yard touchdown pass with 19 seconds left to defeat the Saints

DEC. 24, 1978

Falcons make their playoff debut and use two unanswered Steve Bartkowski touchdown passes to rally past Philadelphia for a 14-13 victory



DEC. 14, 1980

Falcons beat the 49ers 35-10 and clinch the first division title in franchise history

APR. 8, 1974

Hank Aaron hits his 715th home run, breaking Babe Ruth's record

1975

Fox Theater re-opens its doors after being closed the year before and would be named a national historic landmark the following year

1976

Georgia-native Jimmy Carter is elected the 39th President of the United States

1976

The Omni Coliseum and complex, now known as the CNN Center, opened

1978

Arthur Blank and Bernie Marcus found The Home Depot



1980

NHL team Atlanta Flames move to Calgary after only eight seasons in Atlanta

1980

University of Georgia wins the College Football National Championship



NOV. 8, 1998

Origination of the Dirty Bird dance at New England as Atlanta dominates the Patriots 41-10

JAN. 17, 1999

"The Kick" Morten Andersen hits a game winning FG in OT to win the NFC title

DEC. 6, 2001

Taylor Smith and Arthur Blank reach preliminary deal to purchase the team for \$545 million

APR. 26, 2008

Falcons draft QB Matt Ryan with the third pick in the 2008 NFL Draft

AUG. 6, 2011

Deion Sanders is inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the first as an Atlanta Falcon

JAN. 13, 2013

Matt Bryant nails a game-winning 49-yard field goal to send Atlanta to the NFC Championship

MAY 19, 2014

Falcons officially break ground on iconic new retractable-roof stadium set to open in 2017

SEPT. 1999

Philips Arena celebrates its Grand Opening with a concert by musician Sir Elton John



JAN. 30, 2000

Atlanta hosts Super Bowl XXXIV between St. Louis Rams and Tennessee Titans

2005

The Georgia Aquarium opens, becoming the largest aquarium in the western hemisphere



MARCH 14-15, 2008

A tornado rips through downtown Atlanta, causing severe damage and forcing the postponement of the SEC Men's Basketball Tournament

2011

NHL team Atlanta Thrashers move to Winnipeg after 11 years



AUG. 2014

The College Football Hall of Fame and Chick-fil-A Fan Experience opens

2014

MLS names Atlanta as 22nd franchise, set to debut in 2017 with new stadium



2015



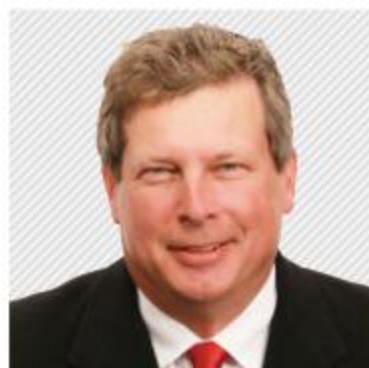
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Warrick Dunn

Former NFL running back with Atlanta Falcons and Tampa Bay Buccaneers who rushed for over 11,000 career yards. Founder of Warrick Dunn Charities. 2004 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year, 2013 Louisiana Champion of Service Award, and recipient of 2011 Jefferson Award for outstanding public service. Earned his EMBA from Emory University in 2013.



John A. Williams

Chairman, CEO, and Director of Preferred Apartment Communities, Inc. Founder of Post Properties, Inc. Member of Board of Directors of Rentech, Inc., a nitrogen fertilizer and wood fiber processing company.



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Brian J. Barker

Founder and CEO of AFS, an industry-leader for 30 years in Transportation Cost Management headquartered in Shreveport, La. Resides in Park City, Utah and is an active community supporter in Shreveport, Park City and Destin, FL, including school age athletics & sports complex, inner-city sports camps, shelter for abused women & children and Trustee of DCWA that provides financial support for at risk kids.



Edwin H. Mendel

Co-founder, Ned Davis Research Group and Davis, Mendel & Regenstein, Inc. President of The Mendel Foundation. Sponsors the Young Angels Camp Scholarship Fund. Serves as life trustee at the Marcus Jewish Community Center and Pace Academy.



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PRESIDENT & CEO

RICH MCKAY

Falcons President & CEO, Rich McKay, a notable fixture in the National Football League for the past 30 years as one of the League's most decorated executives, begins his 12th season with the Atlanta Falcons.

The son of late legendary University of Southern California head football coach John McKay, Rich has held the title of NFL General Manager or team president for two of the League's 32 franchises (Tampa Bay & Atlanta) for 22 consecutive seasons.

After serving the first eight years as President of the Falcons, McKay was promoted to President and CEO of the club by Owner and Chairman Arthur M. Blank on September 1, 2011.

McKay's long-term involvement in the NFL includes many notable achievements. He has played pivotal roles in two successful stadium negotiations (Atlanta and Tampa Bay), he was the General Manager and chief football architect for a Super Bowl championship team in Tampa Bay (XXXVII), he has served as an active participant within the NFL's committee system to help advance the game and the NFL's business and was substantially involved in the Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations which led to the current multi-year agreement signed in 2011 with the NFL and the NFL Players Association.

Additionally, McKay has been a member of the NFL's Competition Committee for the past 22 years. He became Co-Chairman of the committee in 1998 and on March 1, 2011, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell named McKay Chairman of the committee which is comprised of NFL head coaches and League

executives who study the game and recommend rules changes and modifications to ensure player safety while promoting competitiveness among all 32 of the League's franchises.

For the past 10 years, McKay has also served on the NFL Management Council Working Group of League executives that helps advise on collective bargaining issues. During the 2011 off-season, McKay played a pivotal role in helping to negotiate a new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the players that resulted in labor peace for the next seven years.

McKay's contributions to the overall on-field and business success of two NFL franchises can be summed up by the fact that no NFL executive in League history has ever drafted two members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame with his first two selections as an NFL general manager (Warren Sapp and Derrick Brooks).

McKay's career success also includes notable accomplishments in the executive suite, as well. According to several League insiders, McKay is believed to be the only executive in League history who has been the political and business point man on the successful negotiation and construction of two NFL stadiums - Raymond James Stadium - Tampa Bay's state-of-the-art, open-air stadium which hosted Super Bowl XXXV in 2001 and Super Bowl XLII in 2009 and the new stadium project currently under construction in downtown Atlanta. McKay, working closely with Blank, the city of Atlanta and the Georgia World Congress Center stadium authority, secured approval and financing

for the Falcons new stadium project after nearly two years of intense back and forth negotiations.

The club broke ground on the new stadium May 19, 2014 with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, Major League Soccer Commissioner Don Garber and Atlanta Mayor Kassim Reed all in attendance for the historic announcement which will keep the Falcons playing their games in downtown Atlanta. The Falcons will begin playing in their sparkling new building in time for the start of the 2017 NFL season.

The state-of-the-art facility will be designed by 360 Architecture based in Kansas City, Mo., and be constructed by Atlanta-based Holder Construction Company partnering with Hunt Construction Group, Inc., H. J. Russell & Company and C.D. Moody Construction Company.

After the conclusion of their second consecutive losing season in 2014, Blank released former Falcons head coach Mike Smith from the final year of his contract after the team stumbled to a 10-22 combined record in 2013 and in 2014.

At Blank's request, McKay took the reins as point man for the 36-day coaching search that resulted in the hiring of former Seattle Seahawks defensive coordinator Dan Quinn as Atlanta's new head coach.

"We took our time and we spoke with a lot of people during this process," McKay. "The things we kept coming back to during the search was Dan's organization, his passion for the game, his positive energy, his keen ability to recognize and evaluate NFL personnel and the way he connected with not



MCKAY'S PERSONNEL SCOUTING ACUMEN WAS A SUCCESSFUL FORMULA WHICH PRODUCED 59 PLAYERS THAT PLAYED IN THE PRO BOWL DURING HIS TIME AS AN NFL GENERAL MANAGER.

only the players and coaches, but with everyone in the building. He was the top choice of everyone on our search committee and we're excited about our future with Dan at the helm."

McKay's 24 seasons as an NFL executive have also been marked by several other significant highlights: During 13 seasons as an NFL General Manager, McKay was the football architect who built six teams that reached the NFC playoffs, three that reached the NFC Championship Game and one team that won a Super Bowl title. His overall record as an NFL general manager was 112-96 with a winning playoff record of 6-5.

McKay also worked with four different NFL head coaches who guided their respective teams to the NFC Championship Game (Tony Dungy in 1999 with Tampa Bay; Jon Gruden in 2002 with Tampa Bay; Jim Mora in 2004 with Atlanta; and Mike Smith in 2012 with Atlanta).

PUTTING TEAM TOGETHER

In the spring of 2008, McKay assisted Blank in the hiring process that landed current Falcons General Manager Thomas Dimitroff and former Head Coach Mike Smith. That impressive seven-year run included two number one seeds in the NFC playoffs (2010 & 2012), a team-record three consecutive playoffs berths (2010-12), four double-digit winning seasons (2008, 2010-12), two 13-wins seasons (2010 & 2012), two NFC South Division championships (2010 & 2012), hosting the 2012 NFC Championship Game and 20 players who were named to the NFC Pro Bowl team.

McKay's personnel scouting acumen was a successful formula which produced 59 players that played in the Pro Bowl during his time as an NFL General Manager. Tampa Bay's 41 Pro Bowl selections between 1997 through 2002 were the most in the NFL. To put it into perspective, the Buccaneers only had 19 Pro Bowl selections in the first 21 years of their history leading up to 1997.

As a GM, 11 of McKay's top former lieutenants have risen through the ranks to sit in the General Manager's chair at other NFL franchises. The men currently occupying those roles in the NFL include Ruston Webster (Tennessee Titans), Dennis Hickey (Miami Dolphins), Ray Farmer (Cleveland Browns), and Les Snead (St. Louis Rams).

While many of the players McKay drafted developed into NFL stars on the field, several have been Pro Bowl performers from a charitable standpoint, as well. Atlanta Falcons Limited Partner Warrick Dunn, whom McKay drafted in 1997, was the recipient of the 2004 Walter Payton/NFL Man of the Year award. This award is presented annually to the NFL's most philanthropic player. Derrick Brooks was also a co-recipient of the award in 2000.

Arguably one of the brightest moments of McKay's distinguished NFL career took place in sunny San Diego, California on January 26, 2003 when he completed the overhaul of the Buccaneers - long considered one of the worst franchises in professional sports. Tampa Bay's 48-21 victory over the Oakland Raiders in Super Bowl XXXVII vaulted the Buccaneers from the basement of professional

sports to the top of the NFL universe.

McKay was the 2005 recipient of the Jack Horrigan Award. This award is presented annually by the Pro Football Writers of America to the club or League office executive who is the most helpful and cooperative with the local and national news media that report on the NFL.

The McKay family is arguably one of the most successful football families with substantial roots in both the collegiate and professional game. Rich's late father, the legendary John McKay, led the University of Southern California Trojans to four National Championships in 16 seasons. Rich's older brother J.K. McKay, who is an executive in the USC athletic department, was a starting wide receiver for the Trojans and was part of two national championship teams (1972 & 1974) and played in three Rose Bowl games while playing for his father John McKay. Between the three McKay's, they have won six National Championships, participated as a player or coach in 12 Rose Bowls, participated as a coach, player or team executive in six NFL Conference Championship Games, won two National Collegiate Coach of the Year Awards, won one XFL Championship as a general manager, won one Super Bowl Championship as a general manager and had their first two draft picks selected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame (Lee Roy Selmon - the first pick for John McKay as a NFL Head Coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1976 and Warren Sapp - the first pick for Rich McKay as an NFL general manager in 1995).

THE MCKAY LEGACY

Coach McKay's legacy was honored last year with the opening of the \$70 million, 110,000 square-foot new Athletic Center at USC named The John McKay Center. The center opened during the summer of 2012 and serves as the home of all USC athletics. Coach McKay had also previously been inducted into the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Ring of Honor as its second member in 2010.

Rich earned his Bachelor's degree in Economics in 1981 from Princeton University. He graduated from Stetson's College of Law in 1984 and clerked for two years for Tampa's U.S. District Judge William Terrell Hodges. McKay worked at the Tampa law firm of Hill, Ward, and Henderson, P.A., from 1986-1992 where he served as General Counsel for the Buccaneers.

Born March 16, 1959 in Eugene, Ore., McKay grew up in Los Angeles and Tampa, graduating from Tampa's Jesuit High School.

As an avid long distance runner, Rich has participated in and finished two New York City Marathons, an Atlanta Marathon, and in March of this year completed the Los Angeles Marathon.

McKay and his wife, Terrin, have two sons; Hunter, a 2012 graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., who is now employed in the Sports Information Office at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Ga. and John, a recent graduate of the University of Southern California who will begin working at NFL headquarters in New York City later this fall.



GENERAL MANAGER

THOMAS DIMITROFF

Since his arrival in Atlanta on January 13, 2008, Falcons General Manager Thomas Dimitroff has been committed to bringing a sustainable winning team to the city of Atlanta. During his first six seasons, the architect of the Falcons roster witnessed the team win 60 games, post five consecutive winning seasons between 2008 and 2012 and earned three consecutive playoff berths for the first time in franchise history from 2010 to 2012. But following the 2014 season, Dimitroff was tasked with assisting Owner & Chairman Arthur Blank with finding a new head coach.

Following a lengthy search, Blank decided on former Seattle Seahawks Defensive Coordinator Dan Quinn. So the Super Bowl pedigree that Dimitroff learned from New England will now be teamed with Quinn and his consecutive Super Bowl appearances in Seattle (2013 & 2014), including a win in Super Bowl XLVIII against the Denver Broncos. It was very clear to Quinn early on how he envisioned his relationship with Dimitroff.

"When I had a chance to talk to some other clubs as I went through it, this one was the best fit for me. Starting with Mr. Blank and then with Thomas. He was the guy that I connected with right away, that I knew I wanted to partner with. I saw that relationship work strongly in Seattle with Pete (Carroll) and John (Schneider). That's what I was looking for, somebody to partner up with to do it together. When I had a chance to connect with Thomas, we had a lot of mutual friends, guys that I respect in the business, but it was that partnership made this one so unique for me."

Dimitroff has been named Executive of the Year by Sporting News two times (2008 & 2010) during his seven seasons in Atlanta. In the draft, he has selected franchise cornerstones QB Matt Ryan, WR Julio Jones, T Jake Matthews, S William Moore, CB Desmond Trufant and OLB Vic Beasley Jr., in addition to adding key veterans via free agency like G Jon Asamoah, DT Paul Soliai, WR Devin Hester and DE Tyson Jackson, LB Justin Durant and OLB Brooks Reed to shore up key positions. In 2008 and 2009, his acquisitions of RB Michael Turner and TE Tony Gonzalez sparked the Falcons most successful five-year run in history.

Dimitroff earned his climb up the NFL mountain to General Manager by working his way through the scouting ranks as a combine/BLESTO Scout, an Area Scout, National Scout and College Director of Scouting.

His father was a big influence on his life. Tom Dimitroff was a high school, college and pro coach turned NFL scout (and a former NFL quarterback for the old Boston Patriots). Other key influences that have also helped shape Dimitroff's philosophy today and aided in his rise to his current post include Falcons Assistant General Manager Scott Pioli and New England Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick.

The younger Dimitroff took a genuine desire for scouting players to the ultimate level early in his life. He became the Canadian Scouting Coordinator for the Saskatchewan Roughriders of the CFL in 1990 as his first taste into the world of scouting. In 1992, he moved on to the World League of American Football, where he scouted all NFL, CFL and World League rosters while tracking player

transactions for the NFL's developmental league.

Dimitroff's career aspirations brought him to the NFL and the Detroit Lions where he became a College Scout in 1994. It was in his years as Scout for the Lions that he was introduced to Atlanta for the first time (living in the Virginia Highlands area) while evaluating the Southeastern part of the country. From there, Dimitroff made his way back to Cleveland in 1998 as a College Scout for the Browns for four years before landing in New England in 2002.

During his five years as the Director of College Scouting in New England (2003-07), he was responsible for overseeing area scouts who evaluated all of the nation's college prospects while scouting and tracking the development and availability of drafted players. The Patriots had a 77-17 overall record in Dimitroff's tenure and they won back to back Super Bowls in 2003 (XXXVIII) and 2004 (XXXIX), while making a historic march on a perfect 2007 regular season.

Last season, Atlanta finished 6-10 and was eliminated from the playoffs after a Week 17 loss to the Carolina Panthers. Dimitroff and his personnel department made 21 moves prior to the draft as they re-calibrated the roster. Atlanta re-signed nine of their own players including: K Matt Bryant, RB Antone Smith, WR Eric Weems, FB Patrick DiMarco and S Charles Godfrey.

When the free agency period began, Atlanta focused on adding speed to both sides of the ball. Dimitroff and the Falcons signed 12 players in free agency including: LB Justin Durant, G Mike Person, OLB Brooks Reed, WR Leonard Hankerson, CB Phillip Adams, DE O'Brien Schofield and DE Adrian Clayborn.

HE HAS AN ACUTE ABILITY TO NOT ONLY FOCUS ON THE TEAM'S NEEDS OF THE PRESENT, BUT TO PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE FRANCHISE.

With the focus turned to the Draft, Dimitroff and Quinn honed in on the defensive side of the ball and addressing the team's pass rush. With the eighth overall pick, Atlanta selected Adairsville, Ga. native and Clemson DE/OLB Vic Beasley. Beasley amassed 101 tackles, 52.5 tackles for loss, 33 sacks, 29 quarterback pressures, 11 passes defended, seven forced fumbles, two fumble recoveries and scored two touchdowns in 48 career games as a Tiger. Dimitroff and Quinn went defense again in the second-round when they added LSU cornerback Jalen Collins before addressing a couple of offensive needs in the third (RB Tevin Coleman, Indiana) and fourth (WR Justin Hardy, ECU) rounds. The Falcons went back to Clemson University for their fifth-round selection and added Conyers, Ga. native DT Grady Jarrett. Atlanta finished out the 2015 Draft with two seventh round picks (T Jake Rodgers, Eastern Washington and CB Akeem King, San Jose State).

DRAFT MANEUVERS

Dimitroff's calculated, yet aggressive tactics on draft day came into play once again during the 2013 Draft. Since arriving in Atlanta, the Falcons have made at least one trade during the draft and that approach continued in 2013. Atlanta held the 30th pick in the first-round, but they knew the player they coveted would not make it past the 23rd selection. Dimitroff called one of his former lieutenants and now General Manager of the St. Louis Rams, Les Snead, who held the 22nd pick. The trade allowed the Falcons to acquire CB Desmond Trufant from the University of Washington. Trufant was the player Atlanta had their sights set on the entire time, but Dimitroff knew they would have to be aggressive to make sure they obtained their target.

Dimitroff did not rest on his laurels during the 2011 Draft. His philosophy of addressing the needs of the team and being aggressive if the organization believes it is the right move was put on display once again. Atlanta held the 27th overall pick entering the draft. While most thought Dimitroff would stay put and take the best player available at 27, he had a different thought. Dimitroff reached out to the Cleveland Browns, who held the number six pick, in hopes of landing an impactful player to help the team. With Dimitroff's keen sense for the draft and talent evaluation, the Falcons manufactured a trade with the Browns and selected University of Alabama wide receiver Julio Jones with the sixth pick.

The 2009 Atlanta Falcons capped off their first back-to-back winning seasons in the history of the franchise with a 20-10 victory at Tampa Bay in the season finale. For long-time Falcons fans, this was quite a monumental feat. But for Dimitroff and his staff, this was just another block in the foundation for this Falcons team.

Before the 2009 season kicked off, Dimitroff went looking for another target for Matt Ryan and the Falcons offense to improve their efficiency when he traded for future Hall of Fame tight end Tony Gonzalez of the Kansas City Chiefs on the eve of the 2009 draft. Gonzalez delivered in a big way with 83 receptions, second-best on team and six touchdowns, including the game-winner at the New York Jets on a fourth down with 1:38 remaining.

Gonzalez was also a positive and winning presence in the Falcons locker room. He possesses the type of leadership qualities Dimitroff looks to add to the roster each season. When he feels he needs to make a move to bolster the roster or retain core players, the decisive Dimitroff doesn't stand idle for very long. He extended the contract of veteran wide receiver Roddy White prior to the start of the 2009 regular season. White responded with another stellar campaign that landed him in his second straight Pro Bowl with a team leading 85 catches for 1,153 yards and a career-best 11 touchdowns.

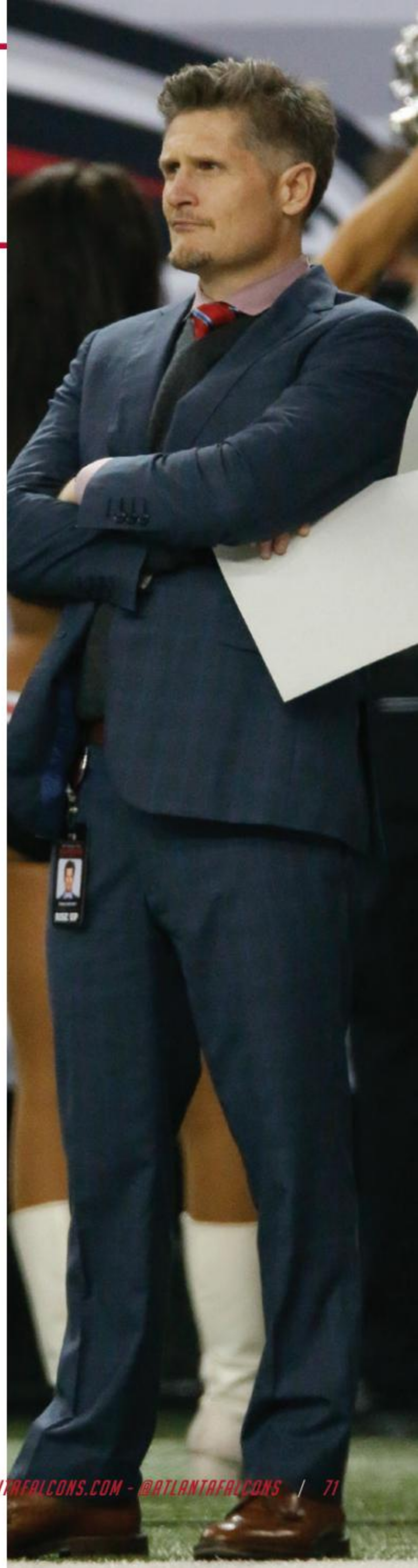
Ryan, the third overall selection in the 2008 Draft, has flourished in his seven NFL seasons. Dimitroff's first draft pick with the Falcons was the consensus NFL Rookie of the Year and has set career and franchise single-season highs including passing yards (4,719), attempts (615), completions (422), touchdown passes (32) and completion percentage (68.6) in 2012. He also helped guide the Falcons offense to the seventh ranked passing attack (292.0 ypg) in the NFL and the sixth ranked scoring offense (26.2 ppg) in the League that season while earning his second Pro Bowl appearance in 2012 and leading Atlanta to the NFC Championship Game for the first time since 2004.

BRINGING IN TURNER

In the 2008 offseason, Dimitroff's first move was signing talented free agent running back Michael Turner from San Diego. Turner fittingly exploded onto the scene as a full-time starter for the first time in his career, finishing with 1,699 rushing yards with a club record 17 touchdowns on his way to his first Pro Bowl, while finishing second in MVP voting. Part of Dimitroff's master plan also includes adding other veterans when needed to shore up his units. For example in 2009, he signed savvy veteran players like linebacker Mike Peterson and cornerback Brian Williams. Peterson finished second on the team with 140 tackles, starting all 16 games, while Williams supplied a punch to the secondary for the first five starts to the season before being lost with a knee injury.

That inherent, tireless drive is one of the main reasons why Dimitroff has been so successful throughout his 20-plus years in the NFL. A product of the championship producing ways in New England, Dimitroff is all about building a winner who is able to compete at the highest level each and every season. He has an acute ability to not only focus on the team's needs of the present, but to plan for a sustainable future for the franchise.

Dimitroff is responsible for all aspects of football operations with the Falcons and working with Head Coach Dan Quinn when constructing the roster. He has final authority over all the signing of free agents, the selection of players in the draft and trades. He will also handle coordinating other football-related activities with Coach Quinn. Thomas and his wife, Angeline, have one son, Mason and one daughter, Aja Neve and live in Atlanta.





THE **FLASH**

ARROW

NEW EPISODES THIS FALL

ATLANTA
THE **CW** 69

EXECUTIVE TEAM MANAGEMENT



Greg Beadles

**Executive Vice President, Chief
Administrative & Financial Officer**

The LSU graduate oversees all financial operations of the Falcons, as well as logistics, facilities management and team travel. Greg also oversees technology planning and management for the Blank Family of Businesses. In addition, Beadles is deeply involved in all aspects of the new Atlanta stadium planning and construction. He was named "CFO of the Year" in 2012 by the Atlanta Business Chronicle.



Danny Branch

Chief Information Officer

Branch is in his 12th season with the Falcons after serving at Home Depot as Vice President of Information Services. The Georgia graduate has more than 30 years of experience in systems development, deployment and support. Branch is responsible for all business IT-related activities for the Falcons and the Blank Family of Businesses.



Lisa Chang

Senior Vice President of Human Resources

Chang joined the executive team in 2014 and leads human resources strategy and policy across the businesses. She also oversees the corporate security and aviation departments. Prior to joining AMB Group, Chang was Vice President of Human Resources for International at Equifax. She was also Senior Vice President of HR for Turner Broadcasting Systems, Inc.



Mike Egan

Senior Vice President and General Counsel of AMB Group, LLC

Egan brings years of experience to the head of the AMB Group after serving 31 years with the Corporate Practice Group of King & Spalding. Egan was the co-head of the firm's Mergers and Acquisitions practice. He serves as operational executive of the new Atlanta stadium construction project with AMB. Egan received his J.D., cum laude, from Harvard Law School and was a Morehead Scholar graduate of the University of North Carolina.



Rob Geoffroy

**Vice President of Finance – AMB Sports & Entertainment
CFO, Atlanta United FC**

Geoffroy began his career with the NBA's Boston Celtics in the finance department and then moved over to accounting for the NHL's New Jersey Devils Stanley Cup Championship in 1995 before returning to the Celtics. On Oct. 6, 2014, he was promoted to Vice President of Finance in 2014 after eight seasons as the club's Controller. Geoffroy is concurrently a Board Member for Atlanta Falcons Physical Therapy Centers and is a graduate of Bentley University.



Mike Gomes

Senior Vice President, Fan Experience

Gomes joined AMB Sports & Entertainment Group as Senior Vice President, Fan Experience in 2014. He is responsible for designing and implementing innovative strategies to enhance the game-day and event experience for Atlanta Falcons fans at the Georgia Dome, as well as for Atlanta United FC fans and event guests at the New Atlanta Stadium set to open in 2017.



David Homrich

**Executive Vice President, Finance &
Investments, AMB Group**

Homrich is responsible for financial planning, investment strategy and management, new business analysis and development and real estate acquisition. Prior to joining AMB Group, he was co-founder and CEO of Homrich Berg, a wealth management firm.



Scott Jenkins

New Stadium GM | AMB Sports & Entertainment Group

Jenkins joined the executive team in 2014 after spending the past seven years as the vice president of ballpark operations for the Seattle Mariners' Safeco Field. He is currently working with a team in the planning and construction of the new Atlanta stadium and will manage its operations.



Jared Miller

Chief Technology Officer | AMB Sports & Entertainment Group

Miller leads technology planning for the new Atlanta stadium, working with a cross-functional team to integrate technology solutions into the new stadium development. He will oversee core stadium technology functions when the new stadium opens.



Scott Pioli

Assistant General Manager

Pioli has spent 23 years in the NFL. He has been named NFL Executive of the Year by various national media outlets five times during his career. In nine-years with the New England Patriots, the club compiled an NFL-best 102-42 (.708) regular season record and won three Super Bowls (XXXVI, XXXVIII & XXXIX).



Reggie Roberts

Vice President of Football Communications

Roberts is in his 24th season in the National Football League and his 12th with the Falcons, where he manages all media and football communications matters. The University of Louisiana-Monroe graduate is the team's liaison with local, national and international media and club contact for TV/radio.



Don Rovak

Vice President of Sales and Service

Rovak spent six seasons as the team's director of ticket sales and service before being promoted to VP of sales in 2013. He built the Falcons' ticket sales department, which has led the NFL in new season tickets sales in four seasons.



Jim Smith

Executive Vice President, Chief Marketing & Revenue Officer

The Northwestern graduate is now in his 12th year with the team and has taken the lead in building the sponsor and partnership programs and is responsible for all marketing and revenue for Falcons, the new stadium and Atlanta United FC. He successfully put in place and oversees a group to design and sell the premium seating options, PSL, suites and sponsorships including the naming rights for the new stadium. Smith has been instrumental in increasing revenues from 32nd in the NFL to now the upper half of the League and is expected to be among the leaders once the new stadium is completed. He is also designed the Falcons popular "Rise Up" campaign.



Tim Zulawski

Vice President of Sponsorship Sales & Service

Zulawski is in his 13th season with the Falcons and leads the club's sponsorship sales initiative to develop and maintain corporate partnerships with local, regional, national and international corporations. He has been instrumental in creating the new commercial partnership platform inclusive of the naming rights and founding partnership programs for the new stadium, the Falcons and Atlanta United FC. The founding sponsorships include names like IBM, Novartis and Equifax. The success associated with the new commercial partnership platform should put the club amongst the top revenue generators in the NFL.



HEAD COACH

DAN QUINN

Dan Quinn becomes the 16th head coach in Atlanta Falcons history and takes over the club after serving as the Seattle Seahawks defensive coordinator for the last two seasons (2013-14). During that span, Quinn oversaw the NFL's top defensive unit as Seattle led the League allowing 270.4 yards per game, 15.2 points per game and 178.8 passing yards per game while holding opponents to 91.6 rushing yards per game. In 2014, Quinn's defense led the NFL in scoring defense (15.9), total defense (267.1), and passing yards (185.6), while ranking third in rushing yards (81.5). The Seahawks also boasted the League's top defensive unit in 2013, en route to a 43-8 win over the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XLVIII.

Quinn originally joined the Seahawks in 2009, after spending the previous six years coaching the defensive lines for the San Francisco 49ers (2003-04), Miami Dolphins (2005-06) and the New York Jets (2007-08). He previously served as the Seahawks assistant head coach/defensive line coach in 2009 under Jim Mora.

Quinn left Seattle in 2011 to become the defensive coordinator at the University of Florida where his defenses ranked in the top-10 in the country. In his first season with the Gators, his defense ranked eighth nationally in total defense (299.5), seventh in passing defense (166.8) and second in third-down defense (27.12 percent).

Prior to joining Seattle the first time, Quinn coached the defensive line for the New York Jets from 2007-2008. In, 2008 the Jets defense ranked fifth in the NFL in yards per carry (3.7), seventh in sacks (41) and ninth in rushing yards per game (94.9). The Jets were also sixth in the AFC in yards per play (5.2) and third-down defense (38.6).

He held the same position for the Miami Dolphins for two seasons (2005-06), where Quinn helped the Dolphins rank first in the AFC and second in the NFL with 49 sacks. Miami also finished third in the AFC in yards per play (4.7) and fourth in yards per carry (3.7).

He began his NFL coaching career in San Francisco as its defensive assistant in 2001 before moving on to coach the 49ers defensive line from 2003-2004. Quinn got his start coaching the defensive line at William and Mary in 1994, followed by a season at Virginia Military Institute. He held the same position with Hofstra for four seasons before being promoted to defensive coordinator in 2000.

Quinn was a four-year letter winner and two-time co-captain at Division III Salisbury (Md.) State as a defensive lineman, where he recorded 139 tackles and eight tackles for loss. He also lettered in track and held the school record in the hammer throw. He was inducted into the Salisbury State Athletic Hall of Fame in 2005. Quinn was born in Morristown, New Jersey.

COACHING BACKGROUND:



(2000) HOFSTRA
Defensive Cord./Defensive Line



(2001-02) SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
Defensive Quality Control Coach



(2003-04) SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
Defensive Line Coach



(2005-06) MIAMI DOLPHINS
Defensive Line Coach



(2007-08) NEW YORK JETS
Defensive Line Coach



(2009-10) SEATTLE SEAHAWKS
Defensive Line Coach



(2011-12) UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
Defensive Cord./Defensive Line



(2013-2014) SEATTLE SEAHAWKS
Defensive Coordinator



(2015) ATLANTA FALCONS
Head Coach

